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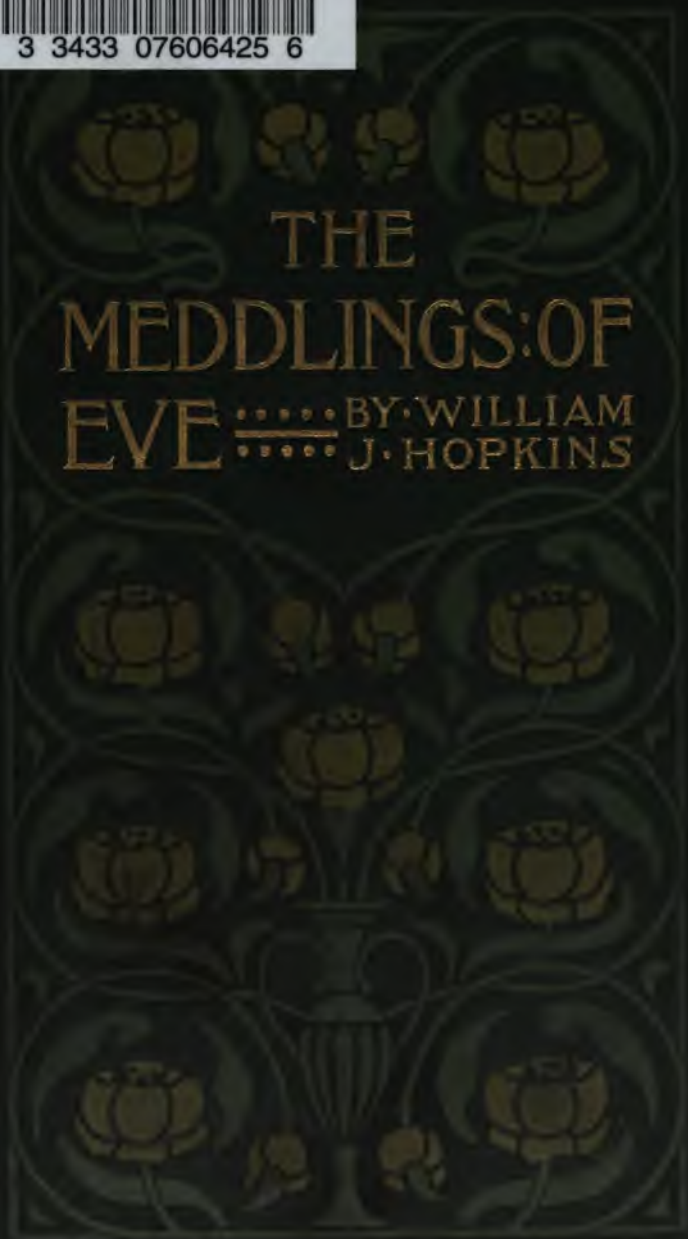
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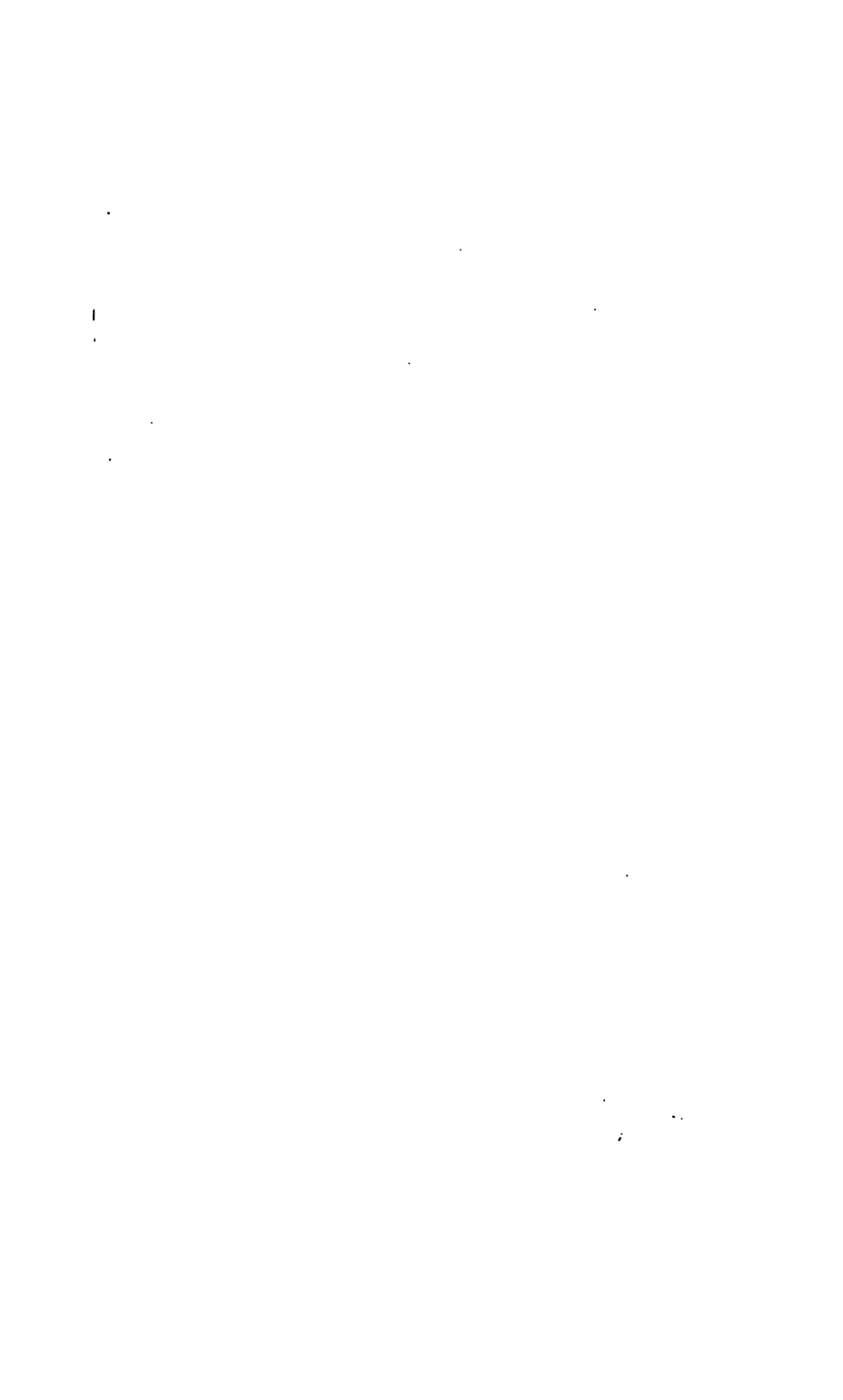
THE
MEDDLINGS: OF
EVE BY WILLIAM
..... J. HOPKINS



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THE MEDDLINGS OF EVE

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BY
WILLIAM JOHN HOPKINS

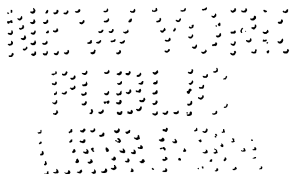
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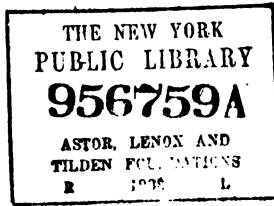


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I

CECILY

I

I WAS sitting under my great pine with my son and my daughter, giving them the instruction which I considered suited to their years. My son, who is nearly four, was much interested, for the time being, in a colony of carpenter ants, which went in procession up one groove in the bark of the pine and down another.

My daughter was seated on the pine needles on the ground, very happy, apparently, in taking up handfuls of the needles, and letting the gentle wind

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sift them between her fingers. As the needles fell in a slow shower she cooed softly to herself, "Oo—ee, oo—ee," over and over. My daughter is not very old. She cannot walk yet, which is why I felt that she did not need to be watched very closely.

I leaned back in my seat, and looked out over the harbor. I saw Tom Ellis rowing slowly by, with his chin sunken on his breast. That was not like Tom Ellis, to be rowing by alone, and slowly, and with his chin on his breast; usually when he is alone, you would think that he was rowing a race. I wondered what he had done—or what had been done to him—that he should be so downcast.

Eve had come and was just behind me. "What is it, Adam?" she asked.

"There's Tom," I answered. "There seems to be something wrong."

Eve looked. "Call him in," she said. "Hurry, Adam!"

And Eve slipped down upon the pine needles beside her daughter, who cooed and gurgled with delight. Who would n't? "Mother's baby!" said Eve. Her son slipped down beside them both.

I went to the edge of the bluff. "Mother's baby!" I shouted.

Tom Ellis was almost beyond hearing; but he looked up at that. It was no wonder. I was unable to shout again, for some minutes; but I beckoned, and Tom shook his head; and I beckoned again, furiously, and Tom shook his head again. It was of no use. I had to get Eve up from her seat on the ground. Eve generally has her way. Tom turned his boat and came in. Eve and I went back to our seat, and pre-

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sently Tom came up my path at the side. It is pretty steep, but the only way up.

"How d'ye do," said Tom. "What did you two people go and interrupt my ruminations for?" He threw himself down beside the children. "Hello, kiddies," he said. They immediately began crawling over him and searching his pockets. Tom has a way with children.

"Tom," I began, "Eve thinks that you should account for yourself —"

Eve interrupted me. "What's wrong? Is Cecily —"

"I guess she is," said Tom. He was silent for some while. "She's broken the engagement — thrown me over — bidden me farewell forever — not a fond one."

"Why, Tom!" cried Eve. "Why,

Tom! It must be some mistake. Cecily could n't mean — ”

“ She did,” Tom replied. “ No doubt about it.”

“ But, Tom,” I said, “ what’s it all about, anyway? You have n't told us.”

Tom had got up. Now he laughed and threw himself down on the needles again; at which my daughter crowed and cast herself upon him.

“ Well,” he said, “ if you must have it, and if you don't know already, it's Cecily's career that's troubling her.”

“ What's the matter with it?” I asked.

“ I am,” Tom returned quietly. Then he fell silent and Eve smiled; and when I would have pressed Tom to say more, she shook her head at me to bid me wait. So I waited, and in time it came. Some of it I knew already, and some of it was news to me. Eve, I suspected,

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knew more than I, which struck me as strange. I had the advantage of her by ten years, if it can be considered an advantage to live in a village and not to know its inhabitants.

One of those inhabitants was Tom Ellis and another was Cecily Snow. To be sure, Tom was away at school when I came, and Cecily was a very little girl. I was not especially interested in very little girls, at that time. And Cecily ceased to be a very little girl, and Tom went to college. The inhabitants of villages are not necessarily benighted, and Tom's father was rich; not nearly as rich as Old Goodwin, Eve's father, but yet rich. In due time, Tom came home; and, sometime between then and now, he became engaged to Cecily. That is the substance of what I knew already. The rest was

news to me. I don't know, even now, as much as a man should know about his neighbors.

Tom had known Cecily all his life — or all hers. That may have been all the trouble. Suppose that Eve had known me all my life! As a small boy, Tom used to meet Cecily when she was no more than a baby in a coach; and he seemed to have some pleasure in recalling how she used to wave her arms excitedly at the sight of him, and laugh. Therefore, as Tom said, — but perhaps not therefore, — he liked her. The nurse-maid, too, took a fancy to Tom, which is not strange, and took some pains that he should meet them. She made a secret of the meetings too. Now, there was no reason in the world why the meetings of a small boy and a baby who lived next door but one

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should have been clandestine, but they partook of that character, largely because of the extraordinary behavior of that nurse-maid. She was a romantic creature — the nurse-maid — and she probably had her plans, even then. Tom had none.

At this point in his narrative I interrupted Tom. "Where is that nurse-maid now?" I asked.

Tom grinned. "Married," he said. "No children. Worthless husband. Lives in a little house on the edge of the village. Takes in washing. You know her."

"Mary MacLandrey!" I cried.

"Oh!" said Eve. I did not in the least know why; neither did she, as it turned out. She merely wished to pigeon-hole that bit of information.

"Mary MacLandrey," Tom repeated.

"I shan't dare to meet her, after this."
And he grinned again.

Then he went on. He used rather to count on meeting Cecily on his way to school, and, again, on his way from school at noon, when he usually stopped to play with her. He made no parade of these meetings with Cecily, because he was a boy of eight, and he was afraid of what the other boys might say if they knew that he liked to play with a baby. What difference did his age make? Are n't we always afraid of what the other boys may say? Do we ever outgrow that fear?

Tom probably would have taken no trouble at all to conceal his meetings with the baby if it had not been for Mary MacLandrey—whatever was her name at that time. The full shame of it did not strike him until some five

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years later, when Cecily was six and he was thirteen. Boys of thirteen have no business to like to play with little girls, and their mates have names for those who do. Those names are not pleasant to hear when shouted out in chorus. That they are apt to be applied in that manner, everybody knows — or, at least, so Tom thought, which amounted to the same thing, so far as he was concerned. So, although he still liked Cecily immensely, his meetings with her were, at this time, truly clandestine on his part. There was nothing clandestine on Cecily's part. She was much too young, and she always despised anything of that kind, anyway.

"Why," said Tom, "I remember how hurt she was when I suddenly put her down, one day, and took to

my heels because I thought that I heard some of the other boys. She would scarcely speak to me when I saw her the next time. But it was Mary's fault. She was always on the lookout for me. 'Run, now, Tommy,' she said, in a whisper that was enough to make any man feel that his motives were unworthy and would not bear the light of day. 'Run, now! I hear Dick and Johnny Cantrell coming.' So I ran. Is it to be wondered at?"

But Cecily must have got over her resentment on that occasion and many another. She wrote regularly to Tom when he was away at school, and he wrote to her—pretty regularly, for a boy at school. Funny little letters they must have been at first, and for a long time after. The correspondence continued until Tom took his degree. It

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would have continued longer, but that Tom came home then, and made writing unnecessary.

He found Cecily a tall girl of sixteen, just blossoming, and he became devoted to her, as was to be expected. At least, Cecily seemed to expect it, and Tom had not the slightest inclination to disappoint her.

Up to the time when Tom finished college, there was no fault that could reasonably have been found with him. He might have worked harder, to be sure; but, as he said, what for? There was no answer. He had got his degree, creditably enough. The trouble was that he seemed to feel that his work was done, and that thereafter, forever, he had nothing to do but play. Why should he work? He had money enough.

Now that is a matter that I touch upon somewhat reluctantly. It is a delicate question whether a man is under any obligation to work unless he has to or wants to. I might offer, in my own defense, the fact that I taught in a school for some years before deciding to have no regular occupation. I got very little gratitude for it — and not much else. No. I shall contribute nothing to the discussion of that question.

Cecily had no such hesitation. As time went by and Tom made no move, she began to prod him, to his intense surprise. He had supposed that his attitude was well understood — and approved. It must have been during an interval of forgetfulness, on Cecily's part, that they became engaged; either she was thoughtless or she was guilty of shameless duplicity, intending to get

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a better hold on him in order to reform him. I should not suspect her of duplicity. It may have happened about the time that her father died.

Cecily's father was never a rich man. He was comfortably off, and he gave Cecily the best that was to be had of everything, even to masters in music and painting such as many a richer man would have felt unable to afford. She had qualified in portrait-painting by the time she was eighteen or nineteen. She seemed to have a positive genius for it. She drew a portrait of me in five minutes one afternoon, and then Eve stole it. Eve did not even let me see it; she said it was too good.

Cecily laughed. "You shall have one, too," she said to me, with a roguish glance; "but not of yourself. It might make you vain."

And thereupon she drew, in another five minutes, a portrait of Eve. I showed it to Eve, keeping a firm hold upon it.

"You need not hold on to it so tightly," said Eve, smiling at me. "I would not take anything away that gives you pleasure. Do you think it is good?" she added.

Good! That portrait hangs, framed, in my study. It is as nearly perfect as anything of the kind can be. No mere pencil drawing can do Eve justice. She needs color. But for a pencil sketch, done in five minutes, it is perfect. Yes, Cecily is a genius at portraits. And portrait painters are born, not made. There is reason in Cecily's contention for a career.

That developed genius of Cecily's may account, in some measure, for the fact that her father left almost no-

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thing for his widow and his daughter besides the house they live in. At any rate, it indicates what manner of man he was, and why he left no more. "A free spender," old Judson called him; and a free spender he was, in ways that are worth while. Cecily's desire to fulfill her manifest destiny, as she put it, is easily accounted for. The consciousness of power and the pressure of necessity both urged her. There was no evident connection between the pressure of necessity and Tom Ellis. She could have been relieved of the one by marrying the other. She could have done that at any minute. He urged her to take that step; he urged her so often that she tired of hearing.

"Tom, Tom," she said impatiently, but smiling, too, "'still harping on my daughter'? You know I won't. If you'd

do something, — or only try, — I might consider it. But, now, — I can't."

"Why should I do something?"

Tom returned. "I take it that you mean something in the way of a business or a profession. I don't need to, and I don't see why I should. I find a plenty to do. There will be more as I get older."

"As you like," said Cecily.

There it rested for a time. Tom was obstinate, — he preferred to call it determined, — and Cecily was no less so. But there was nothing mean about Tom, and he was quite ready and willing to support Cecily's mother, if they would only let him. Mrs. Snow would have been willing enough, for she was fond of Tom; but she had very little to say about it. The idea did not commend itself to Cecily.

II

That state of affairs, manifestly, could not continue forever. It had already continued longer than Tom thought wise, and he made up his mind to settle it. He went into the Snows' last night for that purpose. It was early, and Mrs. Snow and Cecily were sitting on the piazza, watching the western sky. The red was just fading out of it. Mrs. Snow smiled as Tom came up the steps.

"Good-evening, Tom," she said. "I suppose it must be about time for old ladies to go in. But I don't want to go quite yet."

"Don't," said Tom. "Stay and lend me your moral support—and whatever influence you have with this young person. I shall need it. But," he added,

smiling, "I don't believe that anybody really has any influence with her."

Cecily laughed. "How absurd, Tom!"

Tom deliberately placed a chair near her and threw himself into it, stretching his long legs. "Cecily," he began slowly, "I've come to ask a favor. I did n't mention it last night because— well, for good reasons. The night before last, I had not thought of it."

"Very remiss on your part. You know, Tom," Cecily said sweetly, "that I will do anything, in reason, for you."

"Marry me," said Tom, as though he were proposing no more than an ice-cream. "We'll run away, to-morrow, and we won't tell your mother anything about it."

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Mrs. Snow chuckled. She seemed much amused.

Cecily laughed again. "O Tom, you are so deliciously absurd, I almost could."

"I promise to be blind and deaf," her mother said.

"You need n't be, mother dear," said Cecily.

"Come on, Cecily," Tom urged. "Let's."

Cecily shook her head slowly. The red was gone from the west, and he could hardly see her face.

"Oh, no, not really, Tom, dear," she said, sighing gently. "I said anything in reason. That is not in reason. You lack ideas, Tom."

"Yes," he answered softly, "I know I do. I have but one idea."

"I wish I could, Tom. I wish I

•

could," Cecily cried, impulsively reaching over to lay her hand on his arm. "You are so good!"

Tom made no move to imprison the hand — which she may have expected or she may not. "Not good enough, it seems," he said. "Well, — why not, Cecily? When will you?"

"Run away with you, Tom?" she asked calmly. "Why, never." She had withdrawn her hand.

"Marry me," said Tom, as calmly as she had spoken. "If you don't want to run away with me, have a big wedding, if you like — church, bridesmaids, and all the trimmings. I will even agree to give a dinner the night before, although I hate them."

"Never that, either," Cecily replied wearily.

"Any way you like, Cecily," said

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Tom desperately, leaning towards her.

"I only want you."

"Tom, dear," said Cecily, then, "I — don't — know. I really don't. I'm afraid — afraid that I don't care enough."

"Don't care enough!" Tom cried. He had not thought of that. "Then I suppose there is no more to be said."

"Oh! Cecily!" said her mother reproachfully.

"I'm only afraid," added Cecily in some haste, "that I don't care enough to overcome my objections."

"State your objections," said Tom, in deep dejection. "What are they — the same old things?" He looked up, but he could not see her face. He did not need to. "Objections overruled," he said decidedly.

Cecily laughed nervously. She recovered herself.

"Oh, I did n't mean to laugh. They are the same old things, Tom," she said softly. "The same old things. Probably neither would be fatal, by itself. But if you'd only *do* something! It seems to me —" Tom grunted impatiently. "Well, then, there is my painting. It is n't only that I love it. You may think me terribly conceited, but I don't think I am. I *can* do portraits." Cecily spoke appealingly.

"Of course you can," Tom agreed. "Have n't you done several speaking likenesses of yours truly? It would n't be right for you to give it up. Cheat future generations out of their birth-right of family portraits? Never!"

Cecily gave a short little laugh.

"There!" she said, triumphantly,
"There!"

Tom gave up his bantering. "But, Cecily," he urged, "I never had the slightest idea of interfering with your painting. You should go on with it just the same — just the same. I should think you would do better. You would be free from any possible anxiety. And I hope that you would be happier — a little. I would do my best."

Cecily sighed. "I know you would, Tom."

Tom turned to her mother. "Can't you help me?"

"Cecily, dear," she said, "Tom is right. You would be throwing away your happiness for nothing. You would get restless and impatient and discontented — perhaps without knowing why — and your work would suffer. I know, dear."

Cecily did not reply immediately. "I can't agree with you, mother," she said at last, quietly. "I wish I could."

"I am considerably older than you, Cecily, dear." They knew that Mrs. Snow was smiling, although they could not see her face. "Long before you are as old as I am, you will agree with me. And you will be sorry — and so shall I, dear."

It is a pity that experience cannot be inherited. Cecily made no reply.

"Cecily," Tom said, grinning, — if it had been light enough for Cecily to see that grin, but it was not, — "Cecily, I have a business proposition to make. I will purchase your portraits of me. And I will adopt a profession."

"Oh, will you?" There was no mistaking the joy in Cecily's voice. Tom

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instantly regretted his joke, but he carried it through.

"I will become your model," Tom continued. "It is a very worthy profession. How many portraits of me have you—in stock, if I may use the term?"

Cecily laughed in spite of herself. She is very ready with her laugh.

"Proposition turned down," she said. "There are about two dozen portraits, some of them life-size. At the market prices, it would bankrupt you, Tom."

Cecily used to paint Tom whenever she had nothing else to do. That was pretty often.

"Oh, I guess not," replied Tom easily. "Call it a bargain, Cecily."

She shook her head; then she remembered that Tom could not see her. "It was n't nice to make a joke about

the profession," said Cecily, on the verge of tears.

"I know," returned Tom contritely, "and I ought not to have done it. But there is Adam. He has no occupation, but he finds enough to do. I never heard you find any fault with him."

"Oh, Adam!" said Cecily. "Adam is an exception."

Now, that was out of the kindness of Cecily's heart that she called me an exception. She does not really think it. But there you are. I know what people think — or what they think they think. I prefer not to state it. And I don't care. I do work, after a fashion, and I have my time all planned out. But I have not taken my neighbors into my confidence, and I am looked upon, I have no doubt, as a horrible example of a lazy man who

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has married money. When I suggested that view of the matter to Eve, she was quite indignant. She would have delivered a lecture to the villagers, if I had been willing, and therein she would have related, perhaps with sundry embellishments, the only true story of — that is, our story. I am not ready for that.

But I don't care what they think of me. I have had my time all planned out for some while. It will be pretty thoroughly occupied with teaching my son and seeing that he has enough Latin and Greek. Now that those studies have gone out of fashion with the colleges, there is nobody to see that a boy gets enough of them unless his father sees to it. There is nothing to take their place; nothing else that will do, for a boy, just what they did.

Modern methods! I snap my fingers at modern methods. I have seen enough of the results of so-called modern methods in my own teaching. There are no results. There — But let us come back to Cecily.

Cecily sighed.

“There is n’t any use in our arguing this over and over, Tom. I’m worn out with it. Our engagement will have to end.”

“When?” asked Tom, soberly.

“Now, Tom,” answered Cecily. “It has ended.” She had been struggling with her finger. “Here’s the ring. I’m going in. I’m tired.”

“Thanks,” said Tom. “Now, I wonder if I can hit Adam’s house with it.”

He might have known he could n’t. It is a long throw from the Snows’ house to mine, even for a crack

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thrower, such as Tom Ellis was a few years ago. But he tried it.

"Oh!" cried Cecily.

"Good-night," said Tom quietly. "I will go, of course. Good-night, Mrs. Snow."

So Tom was gone; and Cecily went in, feeling very much alone. Nobody was on her side, but everybody was against her. And, thinking that, she went to her own room and cried. What for? She had had her own way. That is nothing to cry about.

III

"Adam," said Eve to me, the next morning, "I'm worried about Tom."

I was doing nothing, of course — hoeing corn. If any one thinks that is doing nothing, just let him try it. I had already gathered our day's harvest,

and my son had run out with each separate ear, and then run back for another. The stalks were taller than my head, and much too close for the wheel-hoe. I cannot use it after my corn gets above my waist. So I was using the hand-hoe — hoeing in the old-fashioned, back-breaking fashion. I straightened up, with a sigh.

“What’s that, Eve?” I asked. “Oh, Tom. What’s the matter with him?”

Eve had come into the corn, stepping daintily. “Isn’t it nice in here, Adam?” she said. “Nobody can possibly see us. Kiss me — but don’t touch me,” she added hastily. “Your hands are too dirty.”

They were. I had pulled out an occasional weed with my fingers, digging in the earth for it. The roots of this dog-grass — but I laughed and put my

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hands behind me, and bent over her, and kissed the sweet upturned mouth. There was a cry from the end of the row, and our son came running in between the hills.

"I want," he cried, holding up his arms.

"And you shall have it, little sweetheart," said Eve. She folded him in her arms, regardless of his hands, which were almost as dirty as mine.

"What is it about Tom?" I asked.

She rose, keeping her hold on her son's hand. "He seemed so downhearted!" she said. "And, now, I am sure he has gone to the wharf, and — and I want you to see that he — is all right, Adam. There's a dear."

"Afraid he will drown himself?" I asked, smiling at her.

"Not really afraid," Eve answered,

laughing a little ; “ but — you go down there, Adam. Will you — just to oblige me ? I shall feel easier.”

I laughed, and dropped my hoe, and went in to wash my grubby hands. I had no fear that Tom would drown himself, or even try to. He would have a hard time doing it, for Tom is a splendid swimmer, and I have yet to see the swimmer who is able to drown himself. His instincts are sure to get the better of his intentions. It was most likely that Tom’s perfectly innocent intention was merely to go out for a lonely sail. The water had been like glass all the morning, up to an hour before, and there was very little wind, even now ; but it seemed the most reasonable explanation.

“ Come, son,” I said, holding out my hand. “ Want to go down to the wharf ? ”

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"Oh, yes!" he cried. "I do." And he took my hand and we said good-by to Eve and set off together.

We saw Tom, when we were near enough, sitting upon the string-piece of the wharf—our only wharf—and gazing out over the water. Eve would have been reassured at the sight. And, as his gaze fell upon his boat, lying at her mooring out upon that quiet water, her sails unfurled, waiting for him, he seemed to settle himself only the more firmly against the pile at his back. I knew just how that pile felt; many a time I had sat upon the string-piece, with my back against that very pile. On such a day as this, it would feel hot against my back, but it would be some comfort to me, and I would drowse and dream, with the quiet harbor before me. It is a peaceful place, with no

marks of progress upon it. The world might be standing still for all that harbor and that wharf show. But what do we care for progress? Out upon it!

He looked up as we approached, and nodded and said nothing. I said nothing, either, but I sat beside him, and my son between us, with my arm around him. And the little harbor seemed filled with peace, too, with the few boats that were left in it lying at their moorings, their cables slack. My son, after a brief greeting to Tom, had been overcome by the drowsiness of the place, and he slept. It was no wonder. I might have gone to sleep myself, but for the necessity of keeping him from falling into the water. Some ancient windmills on the farther shore turned lazily in the gentle southwest

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wind, protesting as they turned. I could hear their groans as I sat there. Harbor and country shimmered in sunshine ; and I found myself dozing and on the point of falling off. I roused myself.

We sat there for a long time, steeping ourselves in sunshine. Time was nothing to us.

" There she comes," Tom remarked.

I cast a glance down toward the bay and saw a sail sauntering into the harbor.

" Who is that?" I asked.

" Alice Carbonnel," said Tom.

" Oh," said I. It was not a complete answer to my question. But Tom is not to blame for that, for we did not know any more of Alice Carbonnel than her name, although it was not our fault that we did not. She had come

sailing in one day, out of a clear sky, so to speak. Nobody knew where she came from, or why she had come — or when she would go, or whither. She was a mystery; and we — and by we I mean the village — were curious about her accordingly. Old women, young women, girls, and men gossiped freely. Even Eve and I have wondered, mildly. But it is all to no purpose; and, although both Eve and I have met Miss Carbonnel — so has Tom, it seems — we know no more about her than about the Sphinx. She is a tall girl, statuesque and beautiful, of a calm demeanor and of few words — your statues never did talk much — and a mystery. That may account for Tom's behavior and for mine.

The sloop came on swiftly, in spite of the lightness of the wind, with Alice

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Carbonnel at the wheel. As she approached her mooring, the girl stood up, tall and more like a statue than ever, and as calm as the calmest of old skippers; and there is nothing calmer. She gave some quiet order—we could almost hear it—and her two sailors quickly took in jib and staysail and had them stowed in a jiffy. She made her mooring deftly.

Soon there was a boat with Miss Carbonnel in the stern of it and a sailor rowing. They made a landing hard by where we were sitting, and Tom jumped to his feet, quickly, to hand her ashore. I would have done it, but that my son was lying within my arm. Indeed, I must have started to get up, for, the first thing that I knew, my sleeping son slipped over the string-piece and plumped into the harbor. I had just

time to hear a little cry from Miss Carbonnel before I hit the water, too.

I overtook my son before he had done going down. He was under water less than ten seconds; but it is a little of a shock for a sleeping youngster to be wakened by a plunge into the harbor. He held his breath instinctively while under water; as soon as his head was clear of the surface he yelled lustily. I tried to divert him.

"See, son," I said, laughing; "we're all wet. What do you suppose mother'll say?"

He stopped crying and began to laugh at the absurdity of it. "Yes, we're a' wet, aren't we?" He called delightedly to Tom. "We're a' wet. See! What will ya say?"

Tom was laughing — very naturally for a man who was supposed to be in

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the depths because of a disappointment in love. How deep does it go? "I should say so, youngster. You'd better get out. See if you can swim to me."

So my son struck out, bravely,— I have taught him the motions of swimming, but he is not able to keep himself afloat, yet,— while I, swimming almost on my back, held up his chin, and incidentally kept a hand on the slack of his little breeches. Miss Carbonnel, seeming more human and less like a statue than she had, wore an anxious look until he was safe in Tom's grasp. Tom drew him up on the float, holding him at arm's length. He seemed to be afraid that my son would shake himself, dog-like. I got myself ashore as gracefully as I could, and there we stood, dripping.

Alice Carbonnel, with not even a

glance at me, stooped her tall body — more gracefully than I had supposed possible — and put her two hands under my son's arms.

"But, Miss Carbonnel," I said hastily, "he is as wet as he can be. Your dress —"

"It is no matter," she said, not glancing up, even then. "Water will not hurt it. Little dear," she said to my son, with a smile that illumined her face, — this beautiful statue had a soul, it seemed, — "little dear, you had a swim for it, did n't you?" She gave him a gentle shake which brought the water out in a shower. Her hands were running rivers.

My son was hanging back a little, half afraid, but half smiling, too, and looking at her with his head a little down, as children will. "Yes," he said ;

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then he changed, suddenly. "I like you," he murmured.

Tom was grinning like any idiot.

"Do you, dear?" laughed Alice Carbonnel. "Well, I'm glad, for I like you, too. And I liked you first. Now you must go home and get on some dry clothes, and, pretty soon, I will come to see how you are. May I?" she asked, looking up at me. It was the first glance she had vouchsafed me. Her calm, even manner of speaking had returned, instantly, and even the smile was gone from her eyes.

"Eve will be much pleased," I said; "and I think my son will be pleased, too."

She turned to him, again. "I will come pretty soon. Will you give me a kiss?"

"Yes," he replied. "I'm a' wet. But

"I don't care," he added. He was willing to waive the matter; my son has a liberal spirit.

Not to indulge in half-way measures, he put both his arms about Miss Carbonnel's neck and kissed her. As was to be expected, her dress was soaked. I hastened to apologize.

Miss Carbonnel was laughing. "It is no matter," she said. "It was worth it, don't you think?"

It was not every one who would have been so indulgent. I went and picked up my hat and coat, which lay where I had shed them. "Come, son," I said; and, bidding good-by to Miss Carbonnel, we started for home. I would not say a word to Tom. I was ashamed of Tom. No one would have imagined, from his appearance, that he was supposed to be cast down. He

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was acting as if Alice Carbonnel were the only woman. Idiot!

IV

We were partly dry by the time we got home, but not attractive figures. Eve did not chide me — or it was of the mildest.

“Oh, Adam, Adam!” she cried.
“What a father you are!”

She heard my tale while she was removing our son's wet clothes. She rubbed him briskly with a towel, and had him dressed again before I had my own wet things off.

“Oh, Adam, Adam!” she said again.
“I shall have to go with you both, the next time.” She was half-way downstairs. “Where is Tom?” she asked.

“Tom is salving a wounded heart,”
I called in answer. “He will not drown

himself. I left him with Alice Carbonnel. He appeared to be content enough."

"Hush, Adam," said Eve, running upstairs again. "Cecily is downstairs."

"Oh, thunder!" I exclaimed. "Why did n't you tell me?" I had put my foot in it, now. I am continually doing that. Who would have thought that Cecily would be downstairs?

I did not hurry down, but there was no escape for me. I found Cecily there. There was a suspicious redness about her eyes, and the corners of her mouth drooped pathetically. But she smiled brightly at me.

"I waited for you, Adam," she said. "I wished to relieve your mind. I suppose — in fact, I know — that Tom has told you our engagement is broken. I broke it. If he can console himself by

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being with Miss Carbonnel I am glad. There is no reason why you should n't have said that—about leaving him with her—to me, but I know very well that you would n't."

She laughed, and I would have said something, but, for the life of me, I could n't think of anything to say. Commonplaces would have sounded silly.

Cecily saw my predicament and laughed again. "I am laughing at you, Adam," she said. "You want to say something comforting and appropriate, and can't think of the right thing. I'll forgive you if you will be properly sorry that I am going away."

"Going away, Cecily!" I exclaimed. "I promise to be as sorry as you can wish. When? Where are you going? And what for?"

"To-morrow. To New York. To make a beginning," answered Cecily. "I've been crying my eyes out about it. I don't want to go, but I shall never want to any more than I do now. I may as well make the break right now. I came in to say good-by and to ask Eve to use her influence. I can't afford to be proud."

"Eve will use her influence fast enough. I wish I had some to use. It would be something to be proud of when you are famous."

"If you would n't mind waiting," said Cecily.

She drooped a little when she said good-by, but she did not cry. Eve proposed seeing her off, but she said that she would prefer that we did n't. It only made it worse to leave your friends behind — visibly.

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"Well," I remarked, when she had gone, "that seems rather sudden."

"Poor Cecily!" said Eve. She said no more for some minutes. "I have no patience with Tom," she added. "The idea!"

"Would you have him moping?" I asked.

Eve looked at me, considering. "Why, yes," she replied; "at least, for a few days. It would n't have hurt him."

"It is rather a quick recovery," I acknowledged.

"It is n't decent," said Eve, with some heat. "I should n't have thought it of Tom."

"N-o," I returned; "still, there is something to be said for Tom. Miss Carbonnel is a very beautiful girl — and a very attractive one."

Eve gave me a quick glance. "You found her so?" she asked.

"You would have found her so if you had seen how she took to your son," I answered somewhat hurriedly. "And he took to her — with both arms."

Eve laughed. "After he fell overboard?"

"After he fell overboard. She would have nothing to do with us before. He got her pretty wet."

"I am ready to love her for that. It was not her fault that Tom —"

"It was not," I said. "Then she asked if she might come in to see how he did after his bath, and I said that you would be glad to have her."

"You told the truth, Adam," said Eve, smiling at me. "You always tell the truth. I brag of it."

"Thank you," said I. "I can admire beauty — I do admire it — whether it

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is my wife's or another's. Miss Carbonnel may be here at any time now."

For I saw Tom Ellis just coming in at the gate, and I put two and two — or one and one — together.

Eve's greeting to Tom was a little chilly. Tom perceived that fact — he is no fool — and smiled a smile of amusement.

"Am I out of favor?" said Tom. "Then I will withdraw to more congenial companionship."

"Miss Carbonnel's?" asked Eve.

"The kiddies'," answered Tom, laughing. "Where are they?"

Eve melted at once. "Tom," she said, "I'm as provoked with you as I can be; but it is impossible to stay angry with you."

"I'm glad of that," returned Tom simply.

"I'll send the children out," Eve continued. "Do you want them both?"

"I want all you've got," said Tom. "I need 'em."

"Bless your heart," said Eve; and she went in to find our son and our daughter. She even carried her daughter to the pine and set her down on the needles beside Tom.

"There!" she said.

"Thank you," said Tom; and they began to play in the needles, very well content, apparently, Tom and my son and my daughter. I heard the laughter of all three as Eve came back to me.

Eve heard it too, and smiled at it. "Isn't Tom dear, Adam?" she whispered. "Who would suppose that he would want to play with our babies, now? But I have my ideas about him,"

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she added. "He is not so simple as he seems."

"You should know," I answered. "You have known him as long as I have — and better. I have my ideas about him, too." Our gate clicked and I looked up. "Here is Miss Carbonnel."

Miss Carbonnel came in, looking more like a statue than ever; a very lovely statue, with a half smile on her face as she met Eve, and a look in her eyes that would have been wistful if she had been anybody else, — as if she were not sure of her welcome, — and an incipient dimple in her chin. It would hardly do for Alice Carbonnel to have full-blown dimples. If it would have been the thing to have dimples, she would have had them — naturally; none of your made-to-order dimples. She was as perfect, in her way, as Eve

was in hers. I cannot say more. And it was a very good way, too.

Eve almost stared at her — not quite. Trust Eve for that. But she had never had a good look at her, near to, before. We had met Miss Carbonnel at one of those solemn functions which are my particular detestation, where you cannot move about the rooms without actually elbowing your way, where you are lucky if you get a glimpse of the person to whom you are presented before you are shoved ahead by the other persons who wish to be presented — or who are supposed to wish it. I always escape from such functions as soon as possible, and Eve usually escapes with me. Eve is very good.

I did not wish to seem backward in greeting Miss Carbonnel, and I did not wish to seem in too much haste, either,

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— for various reasons; so I strolled up, some way behind Eve, and, when I had mentioned our joy at seeing her — and one or two other things — I excused myself. Miss Carbonnel bowed her head graciously, but neither she nor Eve seemed to think it a matter of the slightest consequence whether I went or stayed. I went; and, as I turned to go, I heard Miss Carbonnel asking after our son.

Eve laughed. “Pukkie?” she said. Pukkie, I may mention, is not the boy’s name, but it is what he is called by every one who knows him well. It was a mark of great favor, on Eve’s part, that she had called him that to Miss Carbonnel. “Pukkie? He is behind that pine with Tidda. Shall we go down there?” I thought that I knew why she laughed. Her reasons were com-

plex, but, in the end, she was laughing at herself.

"And who is Tidda?" asked Miss Carbonnel, starting off with Eve. "Your maid, perhaps?"

"Tidda is Pukkie's sister," Eve replied. "She is very young."

"Oh!" cried Miss Carbonnel, in surprise — in pleased surprise, I thought. "A baby?" She hurried a little — just the least little bit.

I went off to my garden and hoed corn violently. I had not intended to hoe corn again that day. I had my corn to myself — until Miss Carbonnel went. Tom went with her.

Then Eve came into the corn. "Adam," she said, "I think your Miss Carbonnel is lovely. You have my permission to admire her as much as you like."

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"Thank you," said I. "But she is not my Miss Carbonnel. What happened at the pine?"

"It was what did n't happen that made it so interesting," replied Eve. "I can't tell you. You should have been there to see." I had been dying to be there, but I had made it impossible. I had no one but myself to blame. "Now," Eve went on, "I am going over to father's, to get some letters for Cecily. She does n't know it. Will you come?"

So we went down the steep path at the side of the bluff, and along the shore, hand in hand, until we came to my clam beds: then up, through the greenery, to the great house on the hill, with its piazzas covered with costly rugs, with its wooden men in many buttons at every turn; with the quiet,

simple, taciturn owner of all that luxury — Old Goodwin, Eve's father. He listened and smiled.

"That's too bad," he said. "Cecily Snow?" And he went in to write the letters.

The next morning I was up early. While I was getting into my clothes I chanced to look out of a front window, and there I saw Cecily. She was on the lawn in front of the house, and she seemed to be searching for something in the grass. It had not been cropped for some days, and the dew lay heavy upon it. I called to Eve.

Eve was already dressed. She gave one look out of the window. "Oh," she cried; and she ran downstairs, and I heard the front door open.

"What is it, Cecily?" she asked. "Have you lost something?"

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Cecily seemed surprised. "Oh!" she said. "I thought — I did n't suppose you would be up so early."

"Have you lost something?" asked Eve again. "Let me help you look for it. Why, the grass is soaking, Cecily. Your feet must be sopping wet. Wait until I get some rubbers. But what is it that you are looking for?"

"Nothing," Cecily answered, with a queer little smile; "nothing much. I thought I might find — but it is n't of any consequence. Don't bother about it."

And Eve, who can see as far through a hole in a millstone as anybody, did not bother; she did not even smile. Cecily was going.

"Wait a minute, Cecily," said Eve. "I've got something for you. Perhaps you would rather take them with you

than have me bring them." And she went to get the letters. Then she explained to Cecily what they were.

"Thank you, Eve," said Cecily, looking down. "You are very good to me — you and Adam. Will you say good-by, again, to Adam, for me?" She stepped forward, to kiss Eve, and raised her eyes. They were swimming in tears. And she turned, hastily, and went.

v

So Cecily was gone. I could not think of her without some pity, although she probably would not have wanted my pity. She was a brave girl, making the plunge all alone, that way, in a great city, and taking her fate in her hands. If it had been Tom, now — but my feelings toward Tom were much mixed, I found.

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Tom was becoming no better than a spaniel to follow Miss Carbonnel about, or a pet dog of some more quiet kind ; for he followed almost too closely at heel for your real spaniel. I had no means of judging how she liked it. Miss Carbonnel came in again a few days after Cecily's going. She and Eve seem likely to become quite intimate ; for Eve likes her, so far as I can tell, and, judging from her behavior, she likes Eve tolerably well. But everybody likes Eve — tolerably well.

Miss Carbonnel came in, as I have said, a few days after Cecily had gone away. She dropped in, as it were, casually ; although I am reasonably sure that her dropping in was carefully planned. When Tom came wandering in, just five minutes later, I thought I saw the shadow of a smile flicker

across her face. Whether the smile, if it had been born, would have been one of amusement at his curious behavior, or one of annoyance, or would have been some index of her pleasure, I could not determine. It might very well have been any one of them.

Tom strolled down to the pine, unconcernedly, — for it was at the pine that we were sitting, of course.

“Hello, you inhabitants of the Garden of Eden,” he said, smiling quietly, as if it were the most natural thing in the world for him to come there. Which, indeed, it was — if it had not been for Miss Carbonnel. “Not cast out yet, I see.”

“We shall be,” I replied, “if you keep on in your evil courses.”

Tom turned and fixed me with his eye, and gave me a knowing glance;

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but what it was supposed to express I was at a loss to understand. I was no nearer to an understanding of what he would be at, than I had been before. He saw Miss Carbonnel when he turned, and seemed surprised.

“Oh,” he said, “good afternoon, Miss Carbonnel.”

“Oh,” said Miss Carbonnel, “good afternoon, Mr. Ellis.” She smiled, then. She did not say that Tom had been with her that morning — nearly the whole of it; she did not give a hint of it, in any way. But I happened to know that he had. I regarded her behavior as suspicious.

“Hypocrite!” I cried. Tom took no notice of me.

My daughter cried out to him from her usual seat upon the pine needles. Her attention, up to the time of Tom’s

coming, had been devoted to Miss Carbonnel.

"Hello, Tidda," said Tom, casting himself down beside her. "So Pukkie has basely deserted us."

"Have n't!" called Pukkie, from his seat beside Miss Carbonnel. "Have n't 'serted."

"Well, then," urged Tom, "come on."

Pukkie shook his head. "No," he said. "Not now." And Miss Carbonnel put her arm about him and Eve smiled.

"All right for you," said Tom. "I won't tell you what I've got in my pocket."

My son did not seem to care what Tom had in his pocket; and we sat there, Miss Carbonnel and Eve and Pukkie and I, saying little, and that little of no consequence; and Tom, not

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addressing a word to us, but engrossed in Tidda's conversation and responding to hergurgles as if they made sense.

Presently Miss Carbonnel roused herself from a long silence, and rose. "I must go," she said, with a little sigh.

"Wait a moment," said Eve. And she sent our son to call the nurse-maid. "I hope you will come in again, soon. I should be glad if you would come often."

"To-morrow?" asked Miss Carbonnel, with a doubtful little smile — the same smile that would have seemed wistful if it had belonged to anybody else.

"Yes," Eve replied, "to-morrow. And as often as you will."

"Thank you," Miss Carbonnel said gratefully.

Then the nurse appeared. She was not a young woman. There was something familiar to Tom about her as he saw her come from the house. Suddenly, he sprang to his feet.

"Mary MacLandrey!" he cried. "I did n't think it of you," he said to Eve.

Eve only smiled at him. "Yes," she said. "My nurse wanted a vacation. You recalled Mary, you remember. I have to thank you for it."

"Yes," said Tom, "I remember. No thanks required."

Mary saw Tom and beamed upon him.

"How d' ye do, Mary?" said Tom.

"Very well, I thank you, Mr. Tom," replied Mary, in a subdued voice, as was befitting. "I hope you 're the same. How is Miss Cecily?" she added, in a still lower voice. "I hear she 's gone

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away. How is she doing in New York, do you know, Mr. Tom?"

Tom shook his head. "I don't know, Mary," he answered. "I don't know."

Eve and Miss Carbonnel had gone on toward the gate. I had lingered to see what Tom would do. Now, he almost ran after them. Mary looked as if she had been struck by lightning.

"Well, I never!" she murmured at last. "Well, I never!"

Tom went out at the gate about fifty feet behind Miss Carbonnel and gaining fast.

"Like a pet dog," I said to Eve, as we went back to our seat, "who has inadvertently been left behind."

Eve laughed. She is very good about that. She does not mind if I use the same simile over and over.

In a few minutes, there were signs

of activity on the great white sloop, which lay in the water like a rock; and a boat put off from her and came back with Miss Carbonnel — and Tom, of course. In another ten minutes, the sloop passed us. Miss Carbonnel was steering and Tom was leaning back, looking up at the main-sail, which was as flat as a board. I was prepared to wave to them; but they did not look up. They sailed out together before our eyes. Mary had gone, with the children.

“A pretty boat,” I remarked. “A very beautiful boat. But I notice that Miss Carbonnel has not asked me out in her.”

“She had better not ask you,” retorted Eve.

“It is a pity that Mary did not wait,” I said. And Eve laughed again, and

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the sloop passed on and was hidden behind the point.

Tom has a boat, as I think I have mentioned; a very pretty boat, too, but not so large as Miss Carbonnel's. One man can manage Tom's boat handily. She has not stirred from her mooring since that day when we sat on the string-piece of the wharf and watched Alice Carbonnel, and my son fell overboard. Tom has been out almost every day, but not in his boat. She lies at her mooring, gathering weeds. She seems likely to lie at her mooring, gathering weeds, for the rest of the season; until long green streamers hang from her keel. When the season is over, I suppose Alice Carbonnel will disappear as mysteriously as she came. I do not know. And it struck me as queer that neither Tom nor Miss Car-

bonnel said anything, so far as I could perceive.

VI

Tom was still looking up at the mainsail as the sloop passed out of sight beyond the point, and Miss Carbonnel steered. At least, she kept her hand upon the wheel, which she moved a little, unconsciously, as the boat seemed to need it; but, all the time, she looked out ahead, with a little half-smile upon her lips, and seemed to be thinking of something else. Her thoughts must have been pleasant ones. She said nothing at all until they were well out of the harbor. Then the half-smile became a whole one, and she turned and gave Tom an amused and kindly look.

“Mr. Ellis,” she said.

Tom started and came down from

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the great sail with a thump. "Yours truly," he returned soberly.

"Mr. Ellis," Miss Carbonnel began, again, still smiling, "do you think it is quite — quite nice —" she laughed openly — "to be following after me as if you were attached to me —"

Tom looked surprised. "I am," he said simply. "Have you forgotten?"

Miss Carbonnel had some right to feel annoyed, one would think. She did not seem annoyed — only amused. "No, I have not forgotten," she replied. "I had not finished. I was about to say — as if you were attached to me by a string."

"Oh," said Tom.

"Yes," said Miss Carbonnel. "As if you were my pet dog," she added severely.

"Seems nice to me," Tom replied,

clasping his hands behind his head and once more looking up at the sail above him. "Seems nice to me," he repeated. "I don't find it so bad to be your pet dog — your pet anything." He looked critically at the mainsail. "That sail sets well — or should I say that it sits well? I don't know."

"Oh," exclaimed Alice Carbonnel, with a quick motion of impatience, "you always were incorrigible — and you have n't got over it. Yes, that sail is well cut and so are the others. My sailmaker attends to that. And the boat is a very good boat, — a beauty, if you prefer, — and I have two men in the crew and no skipper but myself, and it is a beautiful day and I like your friends — very much. There! Now, I have answered all the small talk that I believe you capable of."

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Tom laughed. "Crushed!" he cried. "You are n't engaged, Alice?"

She did not appear to resent the use of her name. "I am not engaged," she answered. "Do you find that strange?"

"No," he said. "It must be of your own choice."

"It is. Is there anything else?"

"Yes," said Tom. "Why did you come here, Alice? I have been curious to know, and everybody wonders."

"I came," she answered, speaking slowly, "to see — But I will not tell you — yet. It was not to see you."

"Oh," said Tom.

"No," said Alice Carbonnel, "it was not to see you. If you thought that it was, you flattered yourself."

"Oh," said Tom, again. "Well, everybody wonders. I suppose you don't care."

"Up to a certain point," returned Miss Carbonnel, "I do not care. It is not important what people say. Beyond that point, I do care. That brings us back to what I started to say to you. We are dangerously near that point."

"Well?"

"Well," she said, smiling, "if you insist upon following me about, — as if I had you on a leash, — people will be gossiping unbearably, even for me."

"People are gossiping about us now," observed Tom calmly. "Almost everybody is. I should n't wonder if Adam and Eve were talking us over at this moment."

"I hope not," she said, in a low voice, looking away. "I hope not. That is the point at which I should like to have it stopped."

"And that is just the point," Tom

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remarked, "beyond which I should like to have it go on. I *want* to be your pet. Please let me be your pet."

Alice Carbonnel laughed. She could not have helped it. "You absurd boy!" she said. "Tell me why you want it, and perhaps you may be."

"I'll bargain with you, Alice," said Tom. "When you are ready to tell why you came here, I'll tell you why I want it."

"I might be able to guess it."

"No guessing allowed," said Tom. "No guessing in the game. I might be able to guess a thing or two."

Miss Carbonnel looked away and was silent for some time. "It's hurting me," she said at last. "It's hurting me in ways that you can't know about."

"I'll take care that the hurt is not

permanent," Tom replied quietly. "I will take all the blame — in plenty of time. It has n't hurt you in the way that you have in mind."

She looked at him sharply, as if to know what he meant by that. Then the look softened. "Well," she said, slowly. "Well, I agree to your bargain. I have your word. You were always a good boy, Tommy, and kept your promises."

"I have always meant to," Tom replied. "You have my word. I won't let it go too far. Remember, now, Alice," — Tom grinned as he spoke, — "you have me on a leash."

Alice Carbonnel smiled and gave a little sigh. "I'm not likely to be allowed to forget it. Now, we'll go back."

She turned the boat about and headed for the harbor.

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If any one had even hinted to Cecily that there might have been episodes in Tom's life which she did not suspect, she would have been very indignant.

VII

One morning, Eve came to me with a letter in her hand.

"From Cecily," she cried, waving the letter triumphantly. "If Tom comes in this morning, let me know. I want him to hear it — parts of it."

"But, Eve," said I, "do I have to wait until Tom comes in? Are n't you going to let me see it?"

"I thought you would n't mind waiting, Adam," said Eve. "I want you to hear it for the first time when Tom is here. You really don't care, you know!"

"Oh," said I.

"And Tom —" added Eve.

"Does?" I asked.

"He may," said Eve.

"Oh," said I, again; and I cast my eyes down toward our gate, and, at that moment, I saw Tom sauntering in, his hands in his pockets.

"I will wait, then, Eve," I said. "But do you want Miss Carbonnel to hear parts of Cecily's letter, too?"

"N-o," replied Eve, slowly, "although there would be no particular objection to it."

"Because here is Tom, now," I continued. "I would advise immediate action. Miss Carbonnel is to be expected at any time — in from five minutes to half an hour. They seem to hunt in couples."

Eve laughed, — I could not decide

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what it was that she laughed at, — and turned and greeted Tom.

“I was just about to read Adam a letter,” she began shamelessly. “Perhaps you would n’t mind. You might possibly be interested to hear some of it, too. It’s from Cecily.”

Tom gave her one of his slow smiles. Tom’s smiles are very pleasant. They are an index to his nature, — simple and honest and sweet-tempered. They make it hard not to love him, even if he does seem to be too easily reconciled; to be playing rather fast and loose with an attachment which should be fast and not loose at all. But I don’t know why he should not be devoted to Miss Carbonnel. Cecily will have none of him.

“It is just possible that I might be interested,” said Tom, in a tone that

left me guessing what he meant. "Do we sit in the usual place?"

Accordingly, we went to our usual seats by the pine. The harbor was spread out before us. I saw Alice Carbonnel's boat lying on the quiet water with no signs of life about her. Tom saw her, too. He looked away again, quickly, but he continued to be conscious of her, although his gaze fell at once upon the distant hills. The day's wind had just begun to blow, but it was no more than a gentle air, as yet, — a cool breath laden with the perfume of the salt sea, and it was in our faces as we sat there. It might be blowing great guns by the afternoon.

"The lights may now be lowered," said Tom; and Eve drew the letter from its envelope, the leaves fluttering gently in the soft air, as though the

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smell of the salt gave it life again. Cecily always responded to that.

Eve began to read to herself, quickly, with a low "m - m, m - m," until she should come to something that she thought would interest us. "This part would n't — oh, here," she cried. "Listen! 'I am pretty well settled, at last. I have a most gorgeous studio, well lighted and high and furnished in good taste, if I do say it, with a few really fine rugs and tapestries. Of course, I can't afford it, but I *must* have a fit place and fit surroundings for the royalties whose portraits I am going to paint. And the rugs and tapestries are hired — rented — whatever you call it — with the studio — all but one rug and one piece of tapestry, which I could n't resist. I shan't tell you what they cost — much more than I ought

to have paid. And there are just two chairs of state, in one of which my waiting patron will sit while my subject—my victim—will sit in the other. Altogether, my studio is bare—very bare—but it is *good*. I am afraid I have put all my eggs in one basket, but it is a good basket.'

- "Adam," said Eve then, looking up from her reading, "don't you suppose Cecily would let us make her a present of some really good things that she would like? If we only knew what she would like! I'm afraid those chairs of state—but they may be good. Only she does n't say much about them."

I nodded; and Tom's attitude expressed a surreptitious interest.

Eve went on. "'I have been a little bothered about one thing, which still bothers me. I ought to have some

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examples of my work to show. Almost everything I have is of Tom,—certainly the best things. And some two dozen portraits of the same man, varied, as they are, in pose and size, are—well, they are not the *most* desirable!” Tom laughed at that; I thought he would have winced. “‘But I have done what I could with what I had. Nobody can do more than that.’”

Then Eve’s voice suddenly subsided, and she skipped. I wondered what it was that she skipped. Probably Tom wondered, too. But I had the advantage of Tom. I could find out and he could n’t.

Eve turned a leaf and began again. “‘I have an apartment—a flat, to put it plainly—that is very good, for a flat. It is a long way from my studio, and it does not compare with my own

home. But I shall come back soon '—
— I thought I saw Tom start — “ ‘to
bring mother on — if she wants to
come. She says that she does — now.
She finds it pretty lonely there. I hope
she won't find it lonelier here. There
is such a crowd here, every one bent
upon his own business, with no time
to give '— But this is not of interest
to you two men,” said Eve. “She finds
it pretty lonely, I judge.”

“Eve,” I said, “you should go in
and see Mrs. Snow.”

“Why, Adam,” she protested, “I do
go. I was there yesterday” — she
glanced at Tom in some amusement —
“and I found —”

Tom interrupted her. “Let's hear
some more,” he said. “There's no-
thing, yet, about her work. What
about orders?”

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Eve turned back to the letter. "She has presented all the letters father gave her. She had rather a hard time doing it, for almost everybody was out of town more than half the week, and, when they were in town, they did n't want to waste any of their precious time in seeing her. Father's letter usually settled it, though," Eve remarked, turning another leaf. "They are apt to. And she has one order, — but there's no work to be done on it until the last of September. He's out of town now, and can't sit for her. She hopes to get others, later."

Eve skipped, in silence, until she came to the last page. "Oh," she said, "she has a telephone in her studio and says she means to call us up, as often as she can afford it, and get the news about us and the children and — and

everybody," Eve finished, rather lamely. "We must call her up once a week. She says it is such a different thing actually to talk with your friends and hear a familiar voice, — it is much more satisfactory than letter-writing."

"Has it beat a mile," observed Tom.

"And she gives her number," Eve continued. And then she read Cecily's number very carefully. She read it twice. I thought it rather strange. But Tom did not seem to be listening.

"May I join you?" said a low voice. There was Alice Carbonnel. She had come without announcement, — she had given that up, some time before, — and none of us had heard her come. Tom may have been aware of it. That may account for his apparent lack of attention. I had given Miss Carbonnel

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a half hour to get there. The time was scarcely up.

VIII

Cecily came home early in September. The word "home" slipped out unconsciously. I do not know why I should call it Cecily's home. She means, definitely, to live in New York, and she came down only to get her mother, and to try to dispose of their house here. She said so, again and again, so that I was forced to take her seriously. If no other purchaser turns up, perhaps Old Goodwin will buy it. He is forever doing services of that kind for other people—quietly. The fact that they generally turn out well for himself makes them none the less services. When he has done that for Cecily—if he does it—she will have no home, so far as I can see. I cannot

conceive of anybody's calling New York "home." The very word might well be lacking from the language if all places were like New York. It is one vast tenement.

I was rather shocked when I saw Cecily. She has always been the picture of health and well-being; not so tall as Alice Carbonnel, — about Eve's height, — but of a well-rounded figure, although not inclined to plumpness. Cecily was — well, she was just right. I cannot describe her any better. Now, after only five or six weeks in New York, she was thinner, almost on the road to gauntness. Her clothes hung upon her, and I thought that I saw dark shadows under her eyes. I ventured to suggest something of my thought — merely to hint at it.

Cecily smiled a cheerful, pitiful little

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smile. "I suppose I am not used to being cooped up in a great city in the hot weather," she said. "But I shall get used to it. It has been hot." She sighed. "Thank you, Adam, for caring enough about it to notice," she added.

Eve noticed, too, but she did not speak of it. Therein, I suppose, lies one of the differences between a man and a woman of equally good intentions. A man is but a clumsy creature, at the best.

We had been at the Snows' to welcome Cecily home; and another thing that I could not help noticing, although, of course, I did not hint at it, in any manner, was Tom's absence. Tom had always been there, before, loafing about as though the house was a second home to him. I cannot recall a single occasion when we had been there that

Tom was not there before us. His presence would not have been so noticeable as his absence. It is to be supposed that that fact was sufficiently impressed upon Cecily without mention of it by me.

"Poor Cecily!" said Eve, as we sauntered home, the light of a young moon lying faintly white upon the road, and making a trail of silver out upon the harbor, — we can catch glimpses of the harbor from the road. "Poor Cecily! I wish that we could do something to make her few days here particularly pleasant."

"Might have a clambake," I replied, with a short laugh. "I am ashamed to say, Eve, that it is the only thing I can think of." Clambakes have become rarer, with me, than they used to be. "At least, it is better than a picnic."

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"Better for you, at any rate," said Eve, smiling, "and at least as good for the others. Well, let us have a clambake. We'll dig our own clams, too."

So on the second day thereafter, we were all assembled at my clam-beds, the whole crowd of us: Old Goodwin and Alice Carbonnel and Cecily and Tom and the rest, even down to the children and their nurse. It was low tide, of course, but there was no poetry in it, for the morning was half gone. Old Goodwin splashed about in his high boots, and Pukkie splashed about with his little breeches rolled up as far as they would go, and he got as muddy as even he could have wished. Old Goodwin and his grandson had famous times together; better than I had, for I was intent only upon getting clams

enough. Tom was intent upon clams, too. It would have been somewhat awkward for him to sit upon the bank between Cecily and Miss Carbonnel. And I noted, in the intervals between clams, that Cecily was looking out over the water and was saying nothing.

Clambakes are not as much fun as they are cracked up to be ; not as much fun for the man who does the work. To be sure, Old Goodwin came over and helped, when the work was more than half done. His help is not to be despised, for he pitches into any work that he undertakes, of whatever kind, with all his might. Tom did not help much. He is not greatly to be blamed. I should have had no heart in the work if I had had the problem before me of being properly attentive to two girls, both of whom were to be present.

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It was a problem requiring the nicest discrimination, on his part. If I had been in his shoes, I should probably have solved it as Tom did — or as it was solved for him.

Old Goodwin took matters into his own hands — possibly through ignorance of the true state of the case. He got Miss Carbonnel off at one end of the table, opposite himself, and he and she, being old hands at the business, disposed of a prodigious quantity of clams between them. I could not determine what part Miss Carbonnel had in it; but I have observed that your tall and stately girls can eat a good many clams, when they eat any. They kept Tom busy with bringing them their supplies, so that he had very little chance for a word with Cecily, and scarcely a chance to eat. Old Goodwin

seemed to drop his habit of silence. He found a good deal to say to Alice Carbonnel and she to him. I could not help noting that, though I do not know what they talked about. They never happened to be saying anything when I was near. I saw plainly that Eve was surprised at it, too.

Cecily made a point of saying something nice to Tom before she went; she made too much of a point of it, perhaps. Eve made off, quickly; I was making off, likewise, as fast as I could. I heard Tom mumbling something, I did n't know what, and I don't believe he knew, either. Before I got away, Cecily called to me.

"Adam," she said, when I had come near, again, "I want to thank you and Eve for the rugs. They are beautiful, Adam, beautiful. I should n't dare ac-

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cept such a present from any one else." There were tears in her eyes as she spoke. "And the chairs, too. My poor old chairs of state! They were pretty decrepit and pitiful. I did n't dare say much about them. But now I am set up. I do thank you both, Adam, from my heart."

She turned away and wiped her eyes and smiled. Poor little girl! I followed Tom's example, and mumbled something, I did n't know what.

But Cecily was not done with her thanks. "You are so good to call me up once in a while! I value it. I know it is you because I can almost recognize your voice." She was thoughtful for a moment. "I suppose it is n't possible always to recognize a voice. I wish it were."

"Not always," I answered brazenly.

"The last time Eve was in New York, she called me, and I did n't know who it was, at all. Now what do you think of that? But I will take pains to speak naturally, the next time."

"Oh, thank you," she said.

I have not called Cecily up. I am ashamed that I have n't. Eve may have — but she almost recognized my voice, did she? And those rugs — she says they are beautiful. I did not send them, and I am ashamed of that, too. Neither did Eve send them. Who did?

IX

The mystery is solved — the telephone mystery; the affair of the rugs and the chairs is not, to my satisfaction, at least. Eve thinks that she knows who sent them. I did not agree with her, at first. Now, I am in doubt.

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She is right, probably. She generally is. I am almost ready to acknowledge it, now that we have found out about those calls.

We agreed to watch the telephone; and, about ten days after Cecily's return, Eve came running to me in some excitement, her eyes sparkling. I was in the garden, doing nothing, of course.

"Come, quick, Adam," she said, in a whisper. "He's calling her, now — this minute."

I arose from my hoeing, rather confused. "Who's calling who — or whom?" I asked. I am afraid I was stupid about it; but my whole attention had been given to my garden.

"Calling Cecily," Eve answered impatiently. "Hurry! Don't make any noise. You will scare him away."

As if it were a strange bird that I

was going to see! But I had recovered my wits, in a measure, by that time, and I followed Eve to our telephone room. It is a little bit of a room, scarcely larger than a good-sized closet, — about eight feet by ten, perhaps, — at the end of the hall. To make it thoroughly sound-proof, Eve had a heavy curtain hung just inside the door. That probably accounted for the fact that the previous calls had been made without our knowing it.

Eve softly opened the door, — very softly, — pulled the curtain aside the least little bit, and beckoned to me. There sat Tom, at my telephone, putting in a call, in my name. As I looked, he was in the act of giving my biography to the operator, and a description of me which I should not have recognized.

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"The color of his hair?" he asked. "Well,— I don't know. He has n't enough of it left to tell the color. I should think that it must have been brown."

Then he seemed to be listening. "Yes," he said, "just plain brown— dirt-color. Put it down as dirt-color."

There was another pause. "Five feet, eleven and a quarter," said Tom promptly. "Weight, one hundred and seventy. Hearty eater. He's fondest of corned beef and cabbage, I think, and pie for dessert. Dinner at half-past six. Sometimes has it at two on Sundays. Was a fairly good ball-player once, but past his prime now. What's that?"

"Oh, his business?" Tom continued. "Well, he has n't any. No, can't get anything to do. No, I don't see

how he lives. Mystery to me. I can't tell you his age, exactly, but he must have been born on a Saturday. Oh, all right."

Tom hung up the receiver and swung half around in his chair. He saw me and grinned.

"Hello, Adam," he said. "Just waiting for them to call me. I'm afraid you will have to bear the odium of this call."

"Who pays for it?" I asked, with some asperity. "Do I do that, too?"

"Of course," he returned calmly. "Would n't you do as much as that for a friend, in a righteous cause?"

"If I were sure that the cause was righteous," said I, somewhat mollified, "I would do more than that. But you need n't have libeled me so outrageously."

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Tom grinned again, but said nothing. His voice does bear a certain resemblance to mine. That may account —

The telephone bell rang viciously. He swung around.

“Hold on, there,” said I. “If I am to pay for this, I’ll just have a little talk, myself, to put myself right with Cecily. There’s no knowing what you may have said to her.”

“Oh, I say!” he cried.

I already had my hand on the telephone. “You wait, Tom. I’ll give you a chance when I am through.” Tom waited. Eve stood in the doorway.

Cecily’s voice came to me clearly. It was good to hear it. I had not realized what it might mean to her; I had not realized what it might mean to Tom, either. I was not at all sure, yet, that it did mean to Tom all that it

might mean. It was for that reason, I firmly believe, and not from any remnants of exasperation on my own part, that I told Cecily the whole truth about the calls.

"Oh, Adam!" she said, in a faint little voice, when I had done. "Oh, Adam! what have I said?"

How was I to know what she had said? It might have been easier for me if I had known. As it was, I could not measure the relative amounts of shame and relief in her voice. It expressed both. I knew that.

"It is just as important, Cecily," I replied, "to consider what Tom has said."

"Ye-s, but — but I can't remember whether I said it or only thought it. Oh, dear, of course you don't understand what I am talking about. I

should like to talk to Eve, before you cut me off."

I called Eve, at once, and gave my place to her. She talked with Cecily for some time, but she spoke very low, so that I could not have guessed what she was saying without listening very closely. I could n't do that, because Tom was there. At last Eve was through, and she beckoned to Tom. He looked very sheepish, as he sat down.

"Now, Tom, make your peace with her," said Eve. "You may have hard work."

Whether Tom succeeded in making his peace with Cecily, or whether he even tried to, I don't know. We went away, and left him at the telephone. He did n't say anything worth mentioning while we were present.

X

After all, it probably did very little good for us to catch Tom at his nefarious work — red-handed, as it were — telephoning in my name. I had half a mind to have him arrested on a charge of — but I don't know what the charge would be. There must be some indictment which could be found against a man who does such a thing.

Tom laughed when I threatened him. "Go ahead, Adam," he said. "I'm game. False impersonation, or something of the kind. There are stacks of things you could charge me with. I'll stand for it."

I could do nothing with him. There was no information to be extracted from him. The effect of his talk with Cecily was not noticeable, during the

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next six weeks or so. I began to doubt whether he made any effort at all to make his peace with her, and Eve was less confident than she had been. Although we called Cecily up regularly and hinted at it, — and then asked her the question, plump, — her answer was always non-committal. She said that Tom had done nothing that did not please her.

Altogether, I do not feel that our interference did Cecily any good. Interference, however well meant, seldom does anybody any good. I talked the matter over with Eve, and we agreed to let matters take their own course in the future, and to wait and see what happened. We have waited a long time for something to happen, and nothing does. I got impatient and complained to Tom about it.

“Be patient, Adam,” he replied, smiling in his quiet way. “If you only wait long enough, I have no doubt that something will happen — although I have n’t the least idea what it will be.”

I was forced to be content with that, while Tom went off to sail with Alice Carbonnel. It was their last sail together, for Miss Carbonnel had her boat laid up the next day, and it had already got too cold to sail with comfort. Tom took charge of the operation ; and, when it was done, and the sloop all properly covered in, he did the same for his boat.

I helped him with his boat. She had not left her mooring for nearly four months, and I should not have been surprised to find weeds upon her long enough to reach to the bottom of the harbor. They were not quite as long as

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that, although there were weeds in plenty; but Tom said nothing. He only began to scrape them off. I started home. I did not see why I should delve in green slime to make up for his reprehensible neglect.

On my way home, I passed the Snows', and saw a load of lumber going in. I was glad, for the fence is in need of repairs, and the house must be in need of them, too. Cecily and her mother have not been able to make any repairs since Mr. Snow died.

I found Miss Carbonnel with Eve, which is not an uncommon occurrence.

"Cecily must have sold her house," I remarked. "I wonder who is the new owner."

Miss Carbonnel smiled. "I am," she said.

I do not know why that announce-

ment should have surprised me, but it did. I was unable to think of anything to say for some minutes, but I looked at Eve. It seemed to me that all of our cherished schemes were tumbling about our ears. If it did not mean that, what did it mean?

Miss Carbonnel saw my embarrassment. It was not difficult to see it. "Mary MacLandrey is coming to live with me," she said.

That mixed me up still more. Surely, she would not have chosen Mary — she would not have happened to choose her, with Tom in such close attendance, if —

"I came in especially, to-day," Miss Carbonnel continued, "to ask you both to use your influence with Miss Snow. I have a fancy to have my portrait painted, and I should like to have her

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paint it. I wrote her about it, and I have a note from her, this morning. She does n't seem to want to come."

She paused and looked at us—at Eve. Her look was calm and level, but I fancied that I detected in it a certain perturbation of spirit.

"No," said Eve; "I can understand that she might not want to come."

"But why?" asked Miss Carbonnel.

Eve looked at her. "Well—you know—she was engaged to Mr. Ellis—until she broke the engagement, last summer. For the sake of her career," Eve added.

"Oh," said Miss Carbonnel; and she smiled, a very winning smile. "Oh, I was afraid that she might have taken a dislike to me."

It was conceivable that Cecily might have taken a dislike to her. What her

meaning was, if she had any meaning beyond what her words expressed, I could not guess. She appeared to be relieved. I hoped she had proper grounds for her feeling — that it was not merely relief at finding that Cecily was not in her way.

“Would you mind,” she asked, “sending her some word, — in my favor, perhaps?”

Eve readily agreed — more readily than I should have done. She called Cecily up, and talked with her for a long time. That talk must have cost me about fifteen dollars; but Eve assured me that it was all for Cecily’s peace of mind, and if I can purchase peace of mind for Cecily for fifteen dollars, I shall consider the money well spent.

So Cecily came down. Miss Carbonnel had attended to the repairs, herself.

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It was astonishing to see the celerity with which carpenters would work, with her eyes upon them; and when Cecily got there, the house was ready. Miss Carbonnel was already occupying it. Cecily stayed with us, and the sittings began at once, in her old studio.

They did not talk much during those sittings, although Miss Carbonnel made several attempts to engage Cecily in friendly conversation. Cecily, herself, told me about it. It was in reply to some question of mine. She always seemed tired—too tired—when she came back in the afternoon.

“No,” she said, her lip curling ever so slightly, “we do not converse. I don’t feel up to it. I really don’t know what we have in common, to converse about.”

She spoke sweetly enough, but there

was the little compression of the lips that I knew so well — in Cecily.

“Why?” I asked innocently. “Doesn’t Miss Carbonnel seem inclined to talk?”

“Oh, yes,” she replied, as if she were weary of the whole thing, “she is ready enough. It is my fault, no doubt. I must work, — and get back to New York just as soon as I get this done.”

“But, Cecily,” I persisted, “I thought it was considered part of the business of the portrait-painter — now-a-days, at any rate — to express the character of his subject. I don’t see how you are going to do that without the exchange of a few words. I have known Alice Carbonnel longer and better than you have, but I don’t feel that I know, in the least, what to make of her.”

“That may very well be, Adam,”

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said Cecily patiently. I laughed; the implication was so obvious.

“Well?”

“Well,” said Cecily, rather sharply, showing some irritation. She has not been accustomed to speak sharply to me. “She — and Eve — insisted on my coming here, to paint her portrait. I don’t know why she should have wanted me. I did n’t want to do it, and I declined. Now I have come and I shall make her picture as beautiful as she is. She can’t complain. I shall finish it as soon as possible and go away again. What more can she expect?”

Cecily needed something soothing. “I have no reason to think that she expects any more,” I replied. “I was thinking of your reputation.”

“Oh, bother my reputation!” cried Cecily. She turned quickly, and ran

up the stairs. On the way, I thought I heard her say something about the portrait's being designed for a wedding present for Miss Carbonnel's husband. I did n't know what there should be in that fact to trouble Cecily.

Nevertheless, it troubled me, and I went to Eve. "Yes," she said, "and I must confess that I am worried. Alice Carbonnel has told Cecily that she is to be married, and that she means the portrait for a wedding gift to her husband. And, Adam," she continued, in a whisper, "Tom goes there every day and devotes himself to Miss Carbonnel during the sittings. I'm losing faith in Tom. It's wicked."

Common decency should have kept Tom from doing that, but he did not seem to be able to keep away from Miss Carbonnel. I did not know what

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to think. Cecily said nothing more about the matter. She worked feverishly. She painted not only what she saw, but she showed the spirit that she thought was there, too. She was bold. I should never have dared to paint Alice Carbonnel, even if I could paint a portrait as well as Cecily could — and did. I had not fully made up my mind about her. Cecily seemed more weary every night. Her condition made us anxious.

The portrait was finished sooner than we expected, but not any sooner than Cecily wished. We were asked over to see it. As we had not had even a glimpse of it, we were especially anxious to go. Cecily told us not to wait for her; she said that she hoped she should never see the old thing again.

Mary told us to go right up to the studio, and we did. We found Alice Carbonnel standing before her portrait, thoughtfully. There was dissatisfaction — keen disappointment — expressed in her attitude, as she stood there. Finally, she turned, and looked at us. She seemed too downcast to think of greeting us. Her eyes were those of a troubled child, and the tears were very near the surface.

“It is as beautiful as any one could wish,” she said, sighing; “but, oh, have I no more soul than that?”

While Eve said — but I don’t know what she said — I don’t see what she could say to give her comfort — but she said something, and I looked at the portrait. It was a beautiful picture, and, at first sight, I found nothing lacking. But, as I looked, the im-

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pression grew upon me that it was the picture of a beautiful statue, cold and hard as marble. Indeed, it was something worse than that — a Rhine maiden, perhaps. It showed all of Alice Carbonnel's beauty, but — did it? I found something in the girl, herself, that I could not find a trace of in the portrait. It was impossible to believe that that was all of her — that she had no more soul than that. Nobody who had seen her with our children about her, for instance, could believe it. I tried to recall whether Cecily had seen her so, but I could not. I should have hated to think that Cecily could have done it of deliberate purpose. But I was not sure.

We stood there, looking at the portrait, in silence, for some time. It would have been difficult to say just what we

thought of it, with Alice Carbonnel there, beside us, and with the painter of the portrait our friend. We felt, in a measure, responsible.

At last, Miss Carbonnel sighed again. Evidently, her heart was heavy.

"Well," she said, "I must go and write a letter for this afternoon's mail. I hope Tom is satisfied!"

That last sentence was not meant for us. It seemed wrung from her.

XI

Again Alice Carbonnel stood, silent, before her portrait. Except for her, the studio was deserted; and, as she looked at the pictured girl sitting there before her, in all her beauty, with a cold half-smile on her lips, her eyes filled. That half-smile expressed coldness, cynicism, a something else that

she could not name, but she liked it less than either coldness or cynicism. She could conceive the pictured girl, there, before her, as capable of any cruelty; as taking delight in the torture of the innocent. Cecily was a genius at portrait-painting. These gifted people have us at a disadvantage. If Cecily's eyes were not yet fully opened, she would see more generously, in time. Meanwhile — well — some other people must suffer, as well as Cecily.

Two tears slowly ran down Miss Carbonnel's cheeks, and she nervously crumpled the letter that she held in her hand. "How could she?" she murmured. "How could she?"

There was a step outside the door. Tom had been ushered in by Mary — with a poor grace, as Cecily was not there — and had come right up, as

was his custom. Miss Carbonnel did not make any attempt to wipe her eyes or to conceal her feelings. She turned toward him.

"Why, Alice!" he cried, in surprise. "What's the matter?"

She smiled with some bitterness, and nodded toward the portrait. "As others see us," she said. "I didn't know I was like that."

Tom gazed at the offending portrait for some minutes. "Well," he said, at last, "I have known Cecily to do better work. It's beautiful enough to satisfy anybody, but there does seem to be something lacking."

"Only my soul," returned Alice Carbonnel, with the same bitter smile. "A small matter, not worth mentioning. I hope you are satisfied, Tom."

"With the picture?" Tom asked

lazily. "Well, no, I'm not. But it is n't mine."

"With the picture," replied Miss Carbonnel, "or with what the picture has done. I don't see how she had the heart to do it." She sighed. "I must try to forget it."

She felt for her handkerchief and dropped the letter; but she did not move to pick it up. She wiped her eyes. Tom stooped to pick up the letter that she had dropped. As he stooped, there was upon his face a quiet smile of satisfaction. It was not like Tom Ellis to feel quiet satisfaction at another's grief—and that other Alice Carbonnel. His smile changed as he saw the letter, which lay at his feet, with the superscription up.

"Harrison Rindge!" he cried. "Harrison Perkins Rindge! I begin to see

a great light. What are you writing to him for? I beg your pardon, Alice." He put the letter in her hand. "I couldn't help seeing it. It's none of my business what you are writing to him for."

Her smile had no bitterness in it now. "I don't mind telling you," she said, "that I am writing him for comfort in my affliction. I must mail the letter right away. It is almost too late for to-day's mail, now."

Tom looked at his watch. "It is too late, Alice. The mail closes, at the emporium, in just two minutes, and it would take you half an hour, at least, to get there. I'll tell you what I'll do." He put his watch in his pocket, with a motion of decision. "I'll guarantee that that letter goes on the New York express this afternoon."

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"Can you do it, Tom? I've a good mind to let you try. You're sure you won't stop and read it, as soon as you're out of my sight?"

"Yep," said Tom. "You'd better trust me, for a change. I have a notion that there's as much for me in that letter as there is for you. I'll get it there, if I have to steal one of Old Goodwin's cars to do it."

Miss Carbonnel laughed. "Try it, then. If you get it there, I'll forgive you."

XII

Eve came to me in the middle of the forenoon of the next day, waving a telegram.

"From Harry," she said. "He's coming down and he's going to stay here."

"What does Harrison Rindge mean

by being so sudden? Have n't we been at him, for months, to come down here? I wonder what can be the cause of his change of heart. When is he coming?"

"That's the point," said Eve. "He is coming on the noon express to-day. His reasons can wait. We have n't any too much time, if we are to meet him. Change your clothes, Adam. I should hate to have you appear in your garden clothes, to meet a New York train. I have to see about his room. Then we'll go over to father's and borrow a car."

I went, grumbling. At the worst, those New York people would think that I was the hired man. My garden clothes are hardly appropriate for a chauffeur, either. Eve has grown very particular.

Harrison Rindge is Pukkie's god-

father. "That other rich man," we used to call him; I once saved him from a watery grave — much against my will. I know him better, now. Old Goodwin has always known him.

Old Goodwin did better than merely to lend us a car. When he heard that it was Harrison Rindge that the car was for, he offered to go himself. He is the best chauffeur that I know.

It was one of the older cars that we had. Old Goodwin drives at such a rate that he nearly uses up a car in a year. His this year's car was laid up with a spavin or something — he had been reckless with it, and it had got its leg in a hole and had strained a tendon. The old car ran like lightning, giving, to Eve and Pukkie and me, fleeting glimpses — very fleeting, indeed, those glimpses — of a country

now sere and bare and brown; now, as we mounted a hill, a sight of the bay, and, now, stretches of woods. The leaves rose in a cloud behind us, and some considerable portion of that cloud settled gradually in the back seat. I was sitting in the back seat.

It is over four miles to the station. We were late, of course,—rather, I should call it a very nice piece of calculation on Old Goodwin's part. He hates to wait, anywhere, for anything. Right ahead of us was the last curve to be rounded before we came in sight of the station. We were pelting along toward that curve when the train whistled and Old Goodwin settled back in his seat with a motion of satisfaction. Indeed, he was just starting to say something—probably about his promptness—when Eve and Pukkie

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and I were thrown into the air. We did not come down on the seat. Pukkie, I have reason to believe, landed among the various treadles with which the floor before the chauffeur's seat is dotted. They are for doing something to the car, I believe; they all worked, apparently. Old Goodwin's wheel held him in. There was a tremendous commotion in the car's insides, and it stopped short,—it had already done that,—and we got out, hurriedly.

We were all very quiet while Old Goodwin made his examination. It lasted a long time; then he extricated himself.

“Dead,” he said with cheerfulness.

At the word there came a little scream, and we all looked up. There were Harrison Rindge and Alice Carbonnel, and he had her in his arms,

and her face—had been turned up to his, I judged. Now, it was turned toward us, and it was very red. They had imagined themselves temporarily out of the world, I suppose, being cut off from the station by the turn in the road. We had been so quiet, all of us, that we had not impressed ourselves upon them until Old Goodwin made that remark.

Harrison grinned, wider and wider, as he approached us. Miss Carbonnel came with a very pretty shyness. She was still blushing as she spoke.

“Well,” she said, “I don’t know that it matters very much. You would have known it before night. But we did n’t mean to—to—inflict that upon you.”

Eve smiled at her. “You almost took my breath away. But I am very glad,—more than you can imagine.

My congratulations to you both." She turned to Harrison. "I am glad, Harry, that you have succumbed, at last. I don't see how you could help it."

"I could n't," replied Harrison. "I did n't want to. You should make a very pretty curtsey, Alice, for that."

"I do," said Miss Carbonnel, smiling and curtseying, there, in the middle of that country road. "Thank you, Eve. May I call you Eve — now?"

Eve smiled back at her; indeed, we were all smiling, continuously. "Of course. I should hope you would, now. But I feel just a little hurt. How long has this deception been practiced upon us? How long have you two people been engaged?"

She looked from Alice Carbonnel to Harrison; and Alice looked at Harrison and laughed.

"You might as well tell them," she said.

"I will, truthfully," he replied, grinning again. "I am not a good judge of time, under the circumstances. When you caught us, Eve, we had been engaged about a minute, I should think. Not more than five, anyway."

"Oh," Eve cried, chagrined, "I'm sorry. You don't *know* how sorry I am!"

"Sorry!" Harrison echoed.

"Yes," said Eve. "Sorry that we should have been in the way."

"Oh," said Harrison, and we all laughed; all but Pukkie, who did not understand what was going on, at all.

We left the car in the ditch—it took the six of us to push it there—and walked back, those four miles. I walked with Harrison, and presently

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Old Goodwin joined us. It was the pleasantest, gayest four-mile walk I have taken in many a day, but it was rather long for Pukkie. When he got tired, Harrison and I took turns in carrying him. It is astonishing how heavy a boy gets to be when he is nearly four. Alice Carbonnel dropped back and walked with Eve. She seemed to wish it.

"You must have been surprised," she said, "at—at everything."

"Yes," Eve answered, "I was. I won't deny it."

"I'm going to confess," said Miss Carbonnel. "Harrison asked me last spring, and I was n't ready to give him an answer, although I liked him well enough to give him his answer then and there." Harrison looked back and smiled at her, and she smiled back at

him. "It was because — because I knew that he had been devoted to you, and I did n't know you, and — in short, I was n't used to playing second fiddle — to anybody."

She laughed shortly, and Harrison turned around to protest. "I'm talking to Eve," said Alice, with a smile; the kind of smile that makes you wish you could leave them alone for five minutes — or more. "You're not supposed to hear, Harrison."

"Now that Harrison is out of hearing," she continued, "perhaps I can talk freely — without fear of interruption. Well, I put him off for six months, and I came down here. He did n't know where I was."

"Oh, yes, I did," called Harrison, over his shoulder; "and I was n't afraid. Possibly you have observed,

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Eve, that I have not accepted any of your invitations for the past six months."

Alice Carbonnel only smiled at Harrison's broad shoulders. "So I came down here," she repeated; "and I met you and — and everything. You know the rest. I found that I was quite willing to play second to you, Eve, and I wrote Harrison yesterday that he might come down if he still wanted to. And here he is, and everybody is happy."

Evidently Eve did not know what to say to the first part of that speech. The facts of the case were rather complicated. So she said nothing. But Alice Carbonnel's last statement was scarcely true.

"But, Alice," she said, "what about Tom? You don't explain his —"

"Oh," Alice answered, as if she had

forgotten Tom, "I met Tom once, five or six years ago, during one of his college vacations. We spent the summer at the same hotel. He was — rather devoted. It did n't mean anything, of course."

"Of course," Eve murmured. She was rather silent for the rest of the way home.

We found Tom mooning about the place. Cecily was going back that afternoon, and Tom knew it. That may have had nothing to do with it, for he seemed to be cheerful enough. He shook hands with Harrison and congratulated him, although nobody had said anything to him about the matter. I wondered how he knew.

As we all stood there, silent but cheerful, Cecily came out. She must have been waiting, just inside the door,

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for us to come back. I did not know how long Tom had been there, but Cecily must have known that he was there, going about like a mild ravening beast, and she had not dared to show herself, before. She knows Harrison Rindge, of course, pretty well. Most of my friends know him.

He came forward and took her hand. "Are n't you going to congratulate us, too, Miss Snow?"

He stood there, smiling at her, and Alice Carbonnel was smiling at her, too. The situation was sufficiently obvious. Poor Cecily seemed to be a little frightened. She murmured something, casting her eyes down.

"How does the painting go?" Harrison asked, thinking, I suppose, to put her at her ease.

"Oh!" cried Cecily, raising her eyes

appealingly. They were full of tears. She turned impulsively to Miss Carbonnel.

"Miss Carbonnel," she said, "the picture — your portrait. I ask your pardon. I want you to let me do another. It will be — different."

Harrison Rindge, evidently, did not know what she was talking about. I did; so did Miss Carbonnel.

"You are very good," she said, with real relief in her voice; "but what will you do with the first one — destroy it?"

"I should like to keep it," Cecily answered, in a low voice, "if you will let me. To remember my mistakes by," she added, smiling a little. "I shall not show it."

"I should consider it a favor," Miss Carbonnel said, "a great favor —"

"On your part," Cecily interrupted.

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"No, on yours. That" — I had never, but once, seen Alice Carbonnel show so much emotion — "that hurt me. You don't know how it hurt."

"I do know," answered Cecily, her eyes again cast down. "I meant it to hurt. I am ashamed of myself. The new one will make up for it. I guess Eve will let me stay."

"If she will not," said Miss Carbonnel, smiling at her, "there is room in the house across the road."

"Thank you," returned Cecily. And she took Pukkie by the hand and wandered off in the direction of the lawn. When she had disappeared around the corner of the house, Tom followed, shamelessly.

"Miss Carbonnel," I asked, "I am curious to know why you did n't say *your* house."

"I thought," she replied, "that it might hurt her — and, besides, it is n't mine. I am only a blind. The house belongs to Tom."

XIII

My lawn lies between the house and the hedge; beyond the hedge is the road. The lawn is not used much, except by the man who pushes the lawnmower over it twice a week, people who are used to us preferring the gate, farther on. The lawn is rather for ornament than for use, and, helped by the hedge, it serves that purpose very well. It is sheltered from the winds, and, that morning, the sun of our late Indian summer lay warm upon it, and penetrated to the inmost recesses of the hedge. The hedge had lost all its leaves, long since, and the tangle of

bare twigs showed plainly, reddish-brown in the sunlight.

When the house concealed her from us, Cecily stopped, and wiped her eyes and smiled. It had been the clearing shower, and she looked happier than she had for some weeks.

"Oh, Pukkie, Pukkie," she said, sighing, "now I don't know what we're here for, except that I had to go somewhere, away from everybody. Why did we come here? Do you know?"

"No," answered Pukkie promptly. "I want to go back where Miss Carb'nel is."

"What!" Cecily cried. "Mercy on us! Everybody seems to want to." She spoke a little impatiently. Then she stooped. "See here, Pukkie. It's nice and warm and sunny here. Stay here,

and walk about with me for five minutes, and then I'll go back."

"Well," said Pukkie, "I will."

So they strolled across the lawn and back, and they found themselves close to the hedge. They slowly walked the length of it and turned.

"Is it five minutes yet?" asked Pukkie anxiously.

"No, you impatient little soul," Cecily answered. "It's about one." Her mouth was beginning to droop again.

"Oh," said Pukkie, "I thought it must be five. Escuse me."

"Bless your heart!" said Cecily. Her eyes wandered from Pukkie to the brown-red twigs of the hedge that were lighted by the sun. A dazzling point of light shone from its midst—from its very heart. As Cecily took a slow step

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forward, the point of light changed from blue to green and then to red.

"O Pukkie!" she cried. She felt a sharp pain at her heart, and she gave a little gasp. "O Pukkie!" she cried again; and she stooped and kissed him ecstatically.

Pukkie had already stopped short.

"Are you sick?" he asked. He looked troubled. "I'll call mother."

"No, no," Cecily said hastily. "I'm not sick. Look there!" She pointed.

"Oh!" He gave a little squeal of delight. "What is it?"

"Get it, Pukkie," she said. "It's mine. Get it."

It was at about the height of his head, and nearly in the middle of the hedge, and hard to get. But he reached in. That throw of Tom's had not been so bad, after all.

"It won't come out," he complained. "Some little baby branches grow out, right over it, and they won't let it come. If I was big enough to have a knife, I could cut those branches off."

Cecily laughed nervously. She had n't a knife, either ; but she could get one.

"Wait, Pukkie," she said. "You wait — and don't tell anybody — and I'll get a knife."

There came a voice — a familiar voice — from behind her. "What's the matter, Puk? I've got a knife. What do you want to cut?"

Cecily turned quickly, and went red and white and then red again. She tried to speak, but she could not.

"Oh, here !" Pukkie called joyfully. "Cut these off."

Pukkie kept his hold on the ring

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while Tom stepped forward, and cut off the twig just beyond his fingers.

"I guess Adam won't miss this," he observed; "although he might give me fits for spoiling his hedge, if he knew it. Give it here, Puk."

But Cecily had recovered her speech.

"No!" she cried. "Give it to me, Pukkie. It's mine." She turned to Tom. "You threw it away," she said. "You —"

Tom paid no attention to her. "Give it to me, Puk," he repeated.

Pukkie hardly knew what to do; but he responded to the authority in Tom's voice, and laid the ring in his hand.

"Thank you, Puk." Tom turned toward Cecily, with his old slow smile.

"Now, Cecily," he said gently, "you shall have it. Hold up your finger."

Cecily stood, wavering, the red and the white chasing each other across her face. She stood wavering for a minute, perhaps, while Tom smiled at her and waited. Then she burst into tears, and Tom gathered her into his arms. What a thing to do, right out in front of the house, in plain sight of any one who happened to be passing! But people are not apt to be passing. It is lucky, for I doubt if it would have made any difference to Tom.

Cecily wept, softly, for a few minutes. Then a smile began to dawn through her tears. She held up her finger. "Put it back, Tom," she whispered. "Why don't you put it back?"

Tom put it back. "There!" he said. "Now, is it on to stay, Cecily?"

"It's on to stay," answered Cecily. "Oh, I have had such an awful time,

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these last few months! Mother was right — and — you were right.”

“I did n’t hope,” said Tom, then, “that you would find it out quite so soon, — although I did my best.”

Cecily laughed. “I forgive you,” she said, “and Miss Carbonnel. *Now* I can paint — with a light heart.”

“So that’s the reason,” said Tom, smiling, “that you —”

“The only reason in the world,” Cecily answered, laughing again. She turned and saw Pukkie, who was regarding them with solemn wonder, his feet far apart, and his hands clasped behind his back.

“Bless you, Pukkie!” she cried; and she snatched him up, and kissed him.

The house across the road will be closed, as soon as Cecily has finished

Alice Carbonnel's portrait. Tom says he will have to spend his winters in New York, for the present. Cecily has her orders to attend to.

II
MARGARET

II

MARGARET

I

WHEN Tom Ellis and Cecily Snow were married, and Alice Carbonnel was safely engaged to Harrison Rindge, — that is, I thought they were safely engaged, — I had reason to expect that I should be allowed to enjoy some peace of mind. Not that I do not always enjoy peace of mind when I have it, and I have it pretty often and for long-continued periods. I am speaking figuratively and in the words of Mrs. Green, who seems to enjoy poor health, generally ; at any rate, there is no doubt that she has it, pretty often, and for long-continued periods, too ;

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and I really think that she enjoys it quite as much as I enjoy peace of mind. When she is really well, which is not often nor for long-continued periods, she does not impress one as being truly happy — not as happy as good health should make every one. For, after all, nothing else counts, as you may observe when — or if — anything untoward happens to the health of your Eve or your Pukkie or your Tidda. Mrs. Green, being alone in the world, and having no Pukkies or Tiddas to worry about and never having had any, does not look at the matter from just that point of view. Symptoms are what she wants. Lacking these, what in the world shall she talk about? It does not seem to occur to her that she is under no obligation to talk at all.

But all this rumination about Mrs.

Green is by the way, — at least, for the present. It is merely what was passing through my mind — or a small portion of what was passing through it — as I was keeping a careful eye on Pukkie and Tidda one afternoon, and while all three of us were waiting for Eve. We spend most of our time waiting for Eve, when she is not with us.

Eve came presently, in some haste. She sat on the seat under the pine and gathered Pukkie and Tidda beside her. "My little dears!" she said.

"And where do I come in?" I asked.

Eve smiled, but did not answer my question. After all, what need?

"I am sorry to be so late, Adam," she said. "I met Mrs. Green."

"Oh," said I, "that explains it."

"Yes," she assented, "it does. It would explain much more."

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"What," I asked, "if you don't mind telling, was the subject of Mrs. Green's conversation?"

Eve smiled again. "I don't in the least mind telling, Adam," she replied. "I am dying to. If I don't, I shall burst. The subject of her conversation was Mrs. Green, until she was exhausted as a subject. She seems to be pretty well now," she added thoughtfully; I thought she spoke somewhat regretfully.

"The poor woman!" I exclaimed.

"The poor woman!" Eve echoed, laughing. "She is a poor woman, although there is no telling what you meant by that remark. But I like it. Come here, Adam."

I was here already; but I squeezed upon the seat and took one child upon my knee, and Eve took the other child

upon hers. We were very comfortable and contented, and so were the children for the time being.

"Do you feel Mrs. Green," I asked, "gradually oozing out of you in a blackish kind of vapor?"

"Yes, I do," she said; "only the vapor is greenish."

"Eve," I observed, "that is not fair. You are stealing my thunder."

"I know it, Adam," she said, moving a bit nearer. "I don't do it often, but you don't know what a relief it is to feel Mrs. Green ooze. I had hard work to keep my temper."

I laughed. Eve has hair which those who are fond of her call golden or copper-colored, according to the way the light fell upon it when they first saw her. It is really between the two, I think, although I have not yet made

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up my mind what its color is. It is the most beautiful hair that I ever saw. That I know. People who did not like her might call it red. I don't know that, for I have never come across any such a person. As for her temper, it is simply angelic; although, when there is occasion, she can get into a noble rage. But Mrs. Green may be one who would call Eve's hair red.

Eve did not mind my laughing. "When Mrs. Green had exhausted herself as a subject of conversation," she went on, "she made some remarks about Tom and Cecily. She said that she had heard that they did not get on very well, and that they would not open their house here at all. I replied that they were coming down for that purpose next week. She seemed rather taken aback."

"Probably —" I began.

"Oh, I know what you are going to say, Adam," she interrupted, hurriedly: "that that was just what she was trying to find out. I thought of that, and I did n't see why it was n't the best thing for me to do to tell her."

Eve is apt to be right.

"Then," she continued, "Mrs. Green turned her attention to Alice and Harrison. She said all the disagreeable things she could think of; and I did n't say anything but just stood smiling like an ivory idol. For, Adam," Eve said in a whisper, "I don't feel sure of Harrison. It's mean to say it, but I don't. I can't help remembering —"

"Why remember, Eve," I said, "the follies of youth? Besides, I don't feel to enjoy it, to use an expression of Mrs. Green's."

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Eve laughed and kissed me, right in plain view of the harbor. But there are few boats out at this season. I saw only a fisherman, too far off to see us unless he used a glass; and there was a solitary digger of clams on the farther shore, paddling about in his rubber boots and intent only upon the mud at his feet.

"Eve," I said, "you embarrass me. Suppose —"

"Oh, suppose — suppose," she returned. "You'd better not suppose, Adam, or I'll do it again."

"Help! Help!" I cried. I was careful not to cry too loudly, for one of the servants might have heard and have come running out. "Help, Pukkie! Embrace your mother. Help, Tidda!"

Pukkie laughed, delightedly. "Yes, I will," he replied, responding nobly.

He fell upon Eve, both arms around

her neck. Tidda, recovering from the momentary startlement into which my cry had thrown her, struggled with him for that honor. Eve presently emerged, laughing and somewhat disheveled.

"That was a mean advantage, Adam," she said.

Here Tidda created a diversion by sliding down from Eve's knee. Tidda, I grieve to say, has a thoroughly determined manner. She means to have her own way and she usually gets it.

"Pukkie," said Eve, hastily, looking after Tidda, who was walking off in the uncertain manner of infants and with an obviously fixed idea as to her destination, "Pukkie, you run and take Tidda's hand and see that she does n't fall. That's a dear."

So Pukkie ran, quite willingly, and took her hand; and Eve and I sat on

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the seat, grinning like two idiots, as we watched the dear little toddlers. But they were our own. And, as we watched, Eve's hand wandered over toward mine, which met it.

"O Adam!" she said, turning her shining face to me. "To think!"

I had some difficulty in getting her back to Mrs. Green. I did not hurry about it; I should have been glad to let Mrs. Green rest peacefully, but I had a feeling that Eve had not done with her. I was right.

"Oh, yes," Eve began again, when I had finally induced her to take up the thread of her discourse, "there was some more. When she had said all that she had to say about Alice and Harrison, she began on Margaret Ronalds. Now, Margaret is coming down here soon, to be with my father. It is, I

think, to get her out of somebody's way. I don't know whose way, and mother may not know, either, for she has not said."

"Margaret Ronalds?" I asked, somewhat mystified. "Your cousin, Eve?"

"Her mother is father's cousin," she replied. "That makes us second cousins, does n't it?"

"And have I ever seen her?" I pursued.

"She came to our wedding," Eve answered. "She was only fifteen then. You must remember her, Adam — a tall, gawky girl, with reddish hair. I have hardly seen her since. She must be nearly twenty-one, now."

I searched my memory and found her: a tall, gawky girl, as Eve had said, rather inclined to silence; but with a sweet face and glorious hair. Her hair

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was just the color of Eve's. It was that that drew my attention to her first, I remember. I had tried to make her talk, and I had found her as sweet and simple as she looked, although, naturally, I had but little to judge by, most of my attention being absorbed by Eve. As for her gawkiness, that was but natural for a tall girl of fifteen. No doubt she has outgrown it. I hope she has not outgrown her reddish hair and her simplicity and sweetness; her resemblance to Eve, in short. All that must come down from Old Goodwin's grandfather.

"Eve," I said, "I will draw a portrait, and I would like to know whether it is a faithful one. Your father's maternal grandfather occasionally showed remains of his own fair hair under his peruke. He was always clean-shaven,

but his beard was reddish. He was a man of simple tastes and very sweet-tempered."

Eve laughed suddenly. "What under the sun, Adam — and how should I know those particulars of my great-grandfather whom I never saw? But I will ask my father."

"Do, and let me know."

"But what I am wondering about," said Eve, "is not my great-grandfather, but Mrs. Green. How could she have known about Margaret, Adam?"

"I give it up," I replied. "I never was good at conundrums. No doubt you will find out, in time."

"I wonder," Eve returned. And she was silent, looking out over the quiet waters of the harbor or after the children. There was an indescribable feeling in the air, prompting me to whistle; but

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I did not give way to it. The birds did : robins, of course, and song-sparrows, equally of course, and bluebirds and meadow-larks. There must have been many other kinds of birds, but those four songs were insistent. A meadow-lark kept alighting on the top of one of my telephone poles, sounding its slow, shrill whistle of four notes, and flying down to the field again. He almost hypnotized me, and I watched him for a long time in a sort of trance. Finally Eve roused me.

“It is almost spring, Adam.”

“It is April, Eve,” I said, smiling at her. “I must see to my planting.”

I rose, reluctantly, glanced seaward, and saw a great winter gull flying with slow wing-beats over the water. Eve was right, in spite of the warmth of the day. It was as like as not that the next

day would be cold, with a bitter wind. It was not yet spring. Indeed, it is to be doubted if we have any spring, but jump from winter into summer at a bound.

I called to Pukkie, and started for my garden.

"Wait, Adam!" called Eve. "I'll go with you."

II

Tom and Cecily came down in a week or so, with Cecily's mother, and they opened their house. Although it was Tom's first experience as real occupant of the house, it was by no means strange to him, for he had frequented it for years. As for Cecily and her mother, it was the most natural thing in the world for them to be there, for Cecily was born in that house, and

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the Snows had lived there always until the last of the summer before. Cecily's studio was just as she had last used it, to paint Alice Carbonnel's portrait in, last fall, and she began to paint at once ; although I do not know whether she is engaged upon her orders or merely painting another portrait of Tom. She already has a large and choice collection of views of Tom, of every known size and from every conceivable point. I have never seen a back view, and possibly Cecily is proceeding to make good that omission. Tom is developing a bald spot. It is to be doubted whether he knows it yet, but probably Cecily does.

Whether or not Cecily is engaged in producing a portrait of her husband's bald spot, they seem as happy as three clams at high water ; for I include Mrs.

Snow. It is an evident disappointment to Mrs. Green that they are. If her information on that point had been correct, there would have been no end of excitement to be got out of the situation ; possibly enough to make up for that which her own health, which was good for the time being, failed to supply. Then, too, she may have felt some chagrin at the unreliability of her sources of information, and may have been in a flutter of suspense lest the information about Margaret Ronalds should prove to be as false. She can be in suspense no longer, for Margaret Ronalds is here.

Eve and I were startled one day by the arrival of an army of servants, the maids under the command of the housekeeper and the men commanded by the butler. I am startled every year

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in the same way ; I can't seem to help it. Eve has managed to get out of the habits of luxury, in which she was forced to grow up, sufficiently to be startled almost as much as I am. The army arrived in Old Goodwin's ocean steamer, debarked in good order, and proceeded to the assault of the castle, while the crew of the steamer landed prodigious quantities of stores. The castle having been carried, the steamer went away and again returned in an astonishingly short time, bringing Old Goodwin, Mrs. Goodwin, Alice Carbonnel, Harrison Rindge, and Margaret Ronalds. Eve and I and Tom and Cecily Ellis were on the strand, singing pæans and all-hailing them at the top of our lungs. Pukkie in my arms, and Tidda in Eve's, also sang pæans. And Old Goodwin, scarcely stopping to kiss

Eve and to nod and smile to me, took both of those blessed children and carried them on his shoulders all the way up the hill to his great house, laughing with them and tossing them as he went.

I turned back from watching the children, to find myself face to face with a tall, quiet, dignified girl, with hair like Eve's. She was smiling and holding out her hand.

"How do you do, Cousin Adam," she said. "I hope you have not quite forgotten me."

I did not say how near I had come to forgetting her. But, whatever the effect of Margaret Ronalds at fifteen, I cannot imagine any man's forgetting Margaret Ronalds at twenty-one. I only hoped that she had not quite forgotten me. Confused as I was by the

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sudden vision, I managed to say so. She smiled quietly but made no other reply. I recognized the fact that without much doubt she adopted that manner of hers merely because it saved her the trouble of thinking up something suitable to say. I do it, myself, on occasion. It has much to recommend it. There is no danger of saying the wrong thing.

Alice Carbonnel and Harrison Rindge were not coming ashore until the next boat, and Eve and I and Margaret Ronalds walked up to the house together. Mrs. Goodwin walked ahead of us, followed, at a respectful distance, by two sailors carrying her personal belongings — or some of them. There would be others later, and a whole procession of sailors to carry them.

Eve did all the talking on the way up, and seemed to find it surprisingly

easy, considering that she had scarcely seen her cousin Margaret for many years. I could find nothing to say to Margaret nor could she find anything to say to me, apparently, we being in that state of pleasurable embarrassment which comes upon one when he meets some one for whom he instantly conceives a great liking, much to his surprise. No doubt I am wrong in including Cousin Margaret in that class or in ascribing to her any embarrassment whatever. She did not appear to feel any, and I have no reason to suppose that she made any effort to find anything to say to me.

When we reached the house Eve went in and I went around the piazza to the front, where there is an excellent telescope and an excellent view of the bay. I had some hope that I might

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find there Old Goodwin and my children whom he had so unceremoniously reft away. They were not to be seen. But I had patience and the telescope, and I amused myself with both for a while. Presently Old Goodwin came, quietly, and the children, not so quietly. Old Goodwin slumped down beside me and both children climbed over him. It did not seem to bother him at all, which might have surprised any one who did not know him so well as I do.

He smiled his peaceful smile. There is no knowing how much that smile of his has been worth to him, first and last.

“Well, Adam,” he said. “I thought I should find you here.”

“And I was sure,” I replied, “that you would turn up here sooner or later. I came here to wait for you.”

I made some inquiries about his

affairs. My inquiries were purely perfunctory, for I knew that he would tell me just as much as he thought it good for me to know and no more. He knew that I knew it. Then, for the same reason, I plumped right at the bull's-eye. There is no use in beating about the bush with Old Goodwin. It only wastes time.

"Margaret Ronalds is a very attractive girl," I said. "I had forgotten how attractive. She makes me think of Eve, and that —"

He smiled again and his eyes twinkled. "That is in her favor."

"That is in her favor, certainly," I agreed, "but hardly necessary." Eve is never out of my thoughts, and Old Goodwin knows it, as he knows almost everything. "Do you mind telling me what she is here for?"

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"Why," he replied, innocently, "to make us a visit, of course."

"Yes," I said, "but why?"

He laughed. "Well, Adam, I will tell you all I know." That was what I wanted. "Her mother is my cousin. About a month ago, she wrote me that she wanted Margaret to stay with us for a while, to keep her out of the way of somebody. Who the somebody was, I must know. So here she is."

"Well," I asked, "and who is the somebody?"

"I don't know," said Old Goodwin; and he chuckled until he was red in the face.

"You don't know!" I cried.

"I don't know," he repeated, chuckling again, "I do not read the society column. If Margaret — Cousin Peggy — wanted me to know, she should have told me."

"Well!"

"Makes it interesting," said Old Goodwin; "very interesting situation. Eh, Adam?"

It did make it interesting, there was no doubt about it. And Old Goodwin, if I knew him, would ask no questions nor would he permit any to be asked by — well, Mrs. Goodwin, for instance. Everybody must take the cards dealt, and play the game. And just then came Alice Carbonnel and Harrison with Tom and Cecily, around the house; and Margaret Ronalds and Eve, out of it. I could not pursue the subject further.

Eve was silent and thoughtful on the way home. By the time we had got to the steep path which leads up to my great pine, I thought that her silence had lasted long enough. I had been

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carrying Tidda, and I stopped to rest before beginning the ascent. I put Tidda down for a moment.

“ Well, Eve ? ”

She turned and smiled quickly at me. “ Well, Adam,” she said, mocking me. “ I have been thinking.”

She took my arm, so that I was forced to take Tidda up on the other side.

“ So I inferred. Are your thoughts worth a penny ? ”

“ I don’t know,” she answered. “ But here they are. I was remembering that you have a cousin.”

“ That seems not unreasonable, Eve. I believe that I have two or three. Which did you mean and what did you want of her ? ”

“ Nothing of her, Adam, nothing at all,” she replied ; “ it was your cousin

Morris that I was thinking of. We — we really have n't seen him for perfect ages. I think — ”

We had got to the top of the bank and I put Tidda down again and laughed aloud. I had a cousin, Morris Gayle, out of college less than a year.

“ True enough, Eve,” I said, when I could speak. “ We have n't seen Morris for perfect ages. I am pining to see him again. Ask him down. He was getting ready to do something, the last I heard; but he was really doing nothing and doing it very well. Ask him down.”

“ Well,” said Eve, in a tone of satisfaction. “ I think I will, if you don't mind.”

“ And, Eve,” I remarked, “ it seems to me that you, too, have a cousin ; on

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your mother's side. I mean Bob. No relation to Margaret, is he?"

"No, he isn't, you — But you aren't a goose, Adam. We should n't have room for him, now. Bob must wait. And if you say another word, Adam, I'll kiss you."

Whether I said another word or not, I decline to tell. But, as we went in, Eve was laughing.

III

True to her purpose, Eve wrote to ask Morris, setting no limit to his visit but skillfully leaving that question open. I know, for I saw her note, and sealed it and posted it myself. Morris, having nothing better on his hands, accepted at once. I do not doubt that he wondered, in his rather dull way, what in particular was up, and I do not doubt,

either, that his curiosity on that point made him the more ready to accept. But I should not have said that. Morris Gayle is a good-natured, pleasant sort of a chap. Because I find him dull is no reason why others should, but rather the contrary. I have no manner of objection to Morris so long as I am not left alone with him. He has no imagination.

We were in somewhat of a quandary as to the particular vehicle in which to go to meet him. It would never do to take Shattuck's old horse. Morris does not care to ride behind old horses, and I do not own a car, for various reasons. I could not borrow one from Old Goodwin — not without borrowing a chauffeur as well. Old Goodwin himself had flown in the night, presumably to New York. If the station were on the shore,

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I should have liked to bring Morris home in my dory. The station, unfortunately, is not on the shore, but nearly four miles inland, and probably Morris would have laughed at me and my dory, anyway, and would have declined to get in. I have other boats, but they are not for such as Morris.

"I have it, Eve," I said. "I will borrow one of your father's cars and shanghai Tom Ellis to drive it."

At which Eve laughed and remarked that I would have no difficulty in shanghaiing Tom. He would, if she knew him, jump at the chance. Tom did jump at the chance. He said at once that Cecily was very busy with her painting and he thought that it would be of no use to ask her. I had had no idea of asking Cecily. Then Tom passed to the question of the car.

Which car would I get? Did I think I would be able to sneak this year's car? Old Goodwin has a particularly fine and powerful car, which he has just bought. In fact, that is the reason why it is fine and powerful, — one reason. Old Goodwin's cars do not last him long. I declined to assume responsibility for that particular car, and I told Tom that he ought to be thankful for any car that was not more than two or three years old. But Tom drew the line at two years. He said that a three-year-old of Old Goodwin's would sound like an asthmatic load of old iron and probably would not go more than a few hundred feet without tinkering.

In deference to that prejudice of Tom's I got him last year's car, and he and Eve and I set out. I have reason to think that Tom is trying to emulate

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Old Goodwin in the matter of speed. I have not the confidence in Tom that I have in Old Goodwin; not enough to make me comfortable. I was on pins and needles while we were going through the village. I should have preferred to walk the four miles, and so, I think, would Eve. I was so nervous that I all but missed seeing a girl who looked like my cousin Margaret Ronalds. She was on one of the short side streets, and by the time I had succeeded in apprising Tom of it, we had gone several hundred feet beyond the corner. He growled something and stopped so suddenly that Eve and I were very nearly pitched out. And the road was narrow and there were no more side streets for about half a mile, so that the easiest thing to do was to back down. Accordingly, we were

backing down, slowly, I keeping a sharp eye out astern, when Margaret turned the corner. Then I whistled and Eve called and Margaret turned and waved to us, and, perceiving that we wanted something more than that, she walked in our direction.

"Eve," I said, suddenly, "does n't Mrs. Green live on that street? Margaret will have to be more circumspect."

"Yes," she replied, "I must tell her."

Then our backing and Margaret's walking had brought us together.

"Come, Cousin Margaret, get in and go with us," I said.

Eve gasped.

"But where are you going?" asked Margaret.

"Oh, just a few miles into the coun-

try," I hastened to answer. I was afraid that Eve might stop me.

So Margaret got in, readily enough.

"I wanted to see you and Eve together," I added, when we were going ahead again. "We are only going to the station to meet a friend."

Again Eve gasped, but Margaret only smiled in her exasperating way. It was impossible to guess whether she knew a great deal or nothing at all of Eve's plans. At any rate, it was all the same to Margaret, evidently. I liked her more than ever. As for Tom, he only chuckled wildly. But what could he know? And he had the car to attend to. He attended to it, I am bound to say, although my heart was in my mouth almost all the way and I could not say a word. Neither could Eve. We had no chance to see the green

things that were springing all about us. Margaret was entirely self-possessed and quite cheerful, in her quiet way, and so was Tom. He was almost too cheerful, breaking out, now and then, into spasms of chuckling over nothing. But Tom Ellis is Tom Ellis. As Eve once had occasion to remark, he is not so simple as he seems on first sight.

Morris Gayle was the only passenger for our little station. I was alone on the platform except for the station agent.

"How d' ye do, Adam," said Morris, taking my hand for an instant. He gazed about him, in some dismay, I thought. "Very kind of you and Eve to ask me down. Real country, here, is n't it?" Again he looked about. There were woods on every side except for the railroad, which stretched away between

its high walls of woods as far as you could see. "How do we get to your place? Do we walk?"

I smiled. "Not this time, Morris. I have a car behind the station."

His face lighted up at that announcement. "Have you, though? What kind of a car? What make? Is it the latest model?"

"I don't know," I answered to all his questions, "I don't know; but it will carry us home, I think."

Although my answer was not all that could be desired, Morris led the way around the station, which was hardly longer than the car. I had to hurry to keep up with him; and I saw him greet Eve and heard her try to present him to Margaret. But he knew her already, it seemed.

"Oh, Miss Ronalds!" he cried. "This

is a pleasant surprise, Eve. I had no idea that I should find Miss Ronalds here."

Margaret only smiled her exasperating smile and said nothing, as was her custom. Eve did likewise; and Morris took the vacant seat beside Tom, with his interests divided between the car and Margaret. I thought that the car had rather the best of it; but there was some excuse for Morris. I should have given him my seat, I suppose. The only reason why I did not give it to him was that I wanted it myself. I hold that to be an excellent reason; the best of reasons. When I told it to Eve later, she only laughed and agreed with me. Besides, as she said, it was a gratuitous assumption to suppose that any one of us would have been better pleased with a different arrangement.

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Morris was evidently longing for a chance to take Tom's place; but Tom does not give up a thing easily unless he wants to give it up, and he kept the wheel all the way home. It was a matter of only seven minutes, anyway. Then there was nothing for Morris to do but to get out with me, leaving Margaret in the car with Eve and Tom.

"I will be back in a few minutes, Adam," said Eve to me.

And Morris leaned over toward Margaret and said something, in a low voice. His manner might have been called fervent. Noting it, Eve smiled knowingly at me. Margaret, who might well have seen Eve's smile, gave no sign of having seen it, but looked sweeter than ever and smiled at Morris. Everything seemed to be progressing satisfactorily, as far as I could see,

although she had not addressed more than ten words to Morris. Then the car rolled away, and I took Morris into the house to erase the signs of his journey, and took him out again to wait for Eve.

Pukkie and Tidda were under the pine, with their nurse. She prepared to take them away when she saw us coming, but I did not want them taken away. I called Morris's attention to the children, as was my duty, and he said that they were fine children, which was the least that he could say, and he made a half-hearted attempt to get them to come to him. Neither Pukkie nor Tidda, after the first glance, would have anything to do with him, and they did not seem to be aware of his presence. This behavior seemed to be less of an embarrassment to Morris than it was

to me. He only laughed and said that he never did get on with children. Then I called his attention to the view, including, in the sweep of my arm, the harbor and its appurtenances as well as my own humble shore.

Morris gave a rapid glance about. "Fine," he said. "It's fine, Adam. I always liked the country," he went on, rapidly. "You have the real thing, have n't you?" His look passed over the harbor in a moment and out beyond. "Gad!" he cried. "Whose is that? That's the stuff. I'll own one like it one of these days."

It was Old Goodwin's ocean steamer, just swinging to her anchor. He had come back, it seemed, in our short absence. I told Morris, and I added, in Old Goodwin's defense, that he had that kind of a boat because it enabled

him to get, quickly and comfortably, wherever he wanted to go. Old Goodwin has other boats for loafing and fishing and amusing himself; but I did not tell Morris, I hardly know why.

"That's all right," Morris replied. "That's all right. He ought to. There's comfort for a man. That's the kind of a boat I want. I'm going to have it, too."

"What have you been doing, lately, Morris?" I asked. "Anything?"

He laughed. "Toward getting one of those? I have n't been doing much, but what I have been doing is not so far out of line as you might think. Doing nothing but pull legs. Is Mr. Goodwin here now?"

"I suppose so, since she is in." I nodded at the great yacht. "Want to

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pull his leg, too? I tell you, Morris, that you can't do it."

He laughed again, good-naturedly. "Perhaps not," he replied, "but I can tell better after I have seen him. I've never met him yet. I suppose it's likely that I shall before long. But don't you be worried, Adam. I shan't disgrace you."

I did not feel so sure of that as I should have liked to feel. If I had known what Morris had developed into, I might not have fallen in with Eve's schemes so readily. I was getting impatient with my waiting for her. Her few minutes had already stretched out into an hour. Another hour alone with Morris and I should be ready for violence. There was no reason why I should expect Eve to take my cousins off my hands; but she does, and she does it as a matter of course.

As I thought this, pacing to and fro,
— I had got to that point, — Eve came.

IV

What Harrison Rindge was doing, alone with Margaret Ronalds and the telescope on Old Goodwin's piazza, one can only guess. He was not saying much, but he looked contented and happy in just sitting there. Margaret was not saying much, either ; but that was not unusual. And she looked contented and happy, which was to be expected. She always looks contented and happy. No doubt, when her mother stated her objections to that unknown and undesirable young man, assuming that she did state them, Margaret looked as contented and happy as usual and said no more than usual, which is nothing at all, or words to that effect. But it is

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not to be thought that because Margaret said little or nothing her thoughts were of the same order of vacuity. What Margaret Ronalds' thoughts are, no man knows, — no woman, either, — but it is safe to assume that she has thoughts on every subject which has possessed interest for her. Tom Ellis is the only person in the neighborhood who can be said to be her equal in concealing intentions behind a smiling front, and it is all done by saying nothing of importance. Margaret would be a match for Mrs. Green.

When Harrison had been silent for a considerably longer time than he usually thought fitting, he turned toward Margaret and smiled. She looked at him very pleasantly but did not smile.

“Well?” he said.

Margaret laughed. "I was n't going to say anything."

"Why not?"

"There is nothing that presses for utterance."

"And do you always wait until something presses?" Harrison inquired, amused.

"Generally," said Margaret, "unless it is a duty to talk. I hate that, but I try to do my duty. There is no duty now, is there? We know each other well enough to be silent when we feel like it and not lose anything."

"Well, and what if I don't feel like being silent?"

"Why, then, don't be." Margaret smiled one of her sweetest smiles.

"It takes two — at least two — to carry on a conversation. Would you have me deliver a monologue?"

"I should probably go in," said Margaret.

"Oh, I am not going to," Harrison replied hastily. "I don't want you to go in."

"Neither do I want to go. What would you like to have me do?"

"I am simply bursting with conversation, but it is of no manner of consequence. It is n't the kind that presses for utterance, as you mean it."

"You would n't have me feel obliged to talk to you, would you? Anyway, I don't. It seems to me that I am doing my part, and I suppose that, if you are skillful enough, I shall continue to do it. It is n't any fun to talk because you feel obliged to."

Harrison took this last as a compliment, which was no doubt just the way

in which Margaret meant it to be taken. She seems to believe in giving her medicine in small doses, like ipecac; and perhaps for a similar reason. Harrison laughed and was about to resume the conversation with which he was bursting, when the door from the house opened and Alice Carbonnel appeared, with Morris following fast.

“Dear me!” murmured Harrison, rising.

That remark of Harrison’s was not intended for the ears of any one; but it reached Alice’s. And the words were run together, as is apt to be the case in such murmured remarks, and the vowels were not clear, so that it would not be strange if Alice mistook it for what it was not. Mistaking the remark, she wondered what its import was, and whether, by any chance, it could have

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any connection with her presence, which was probably unexpected and, conceivably, might not have been desired. There is no doubt that Harrison made a mistake in murmuring that "dear me!" but his fundamental mistake lay in his sitting alone with Margaret Ronalds and the telescope and in appearing to enjoy the extremely edifying but entirely blameless conversation which he was carrying on in so lively a manner.

Alice's head was held a bit higher than was customary or necessary; it rose imperceptibly and immediately. Its change of poise escaped Harrison's attention completely, as why should it not? He was not looking for any such change. Neither was Margaret, but it did not escape her attention, and she was troubled accordingly. She showed

no outward sign of disturbance as Morris was shaking hands with Harrison, who remained standing until he went away with Alice Carbonnel. Margaret watched them go, and she saw that Alice's head was still held high, while Harrison, unconscious, chatted on.

Margaret sighed and turned to Morris. That sigh might have meant almost anything, but it is inconceivable that a sigh from Margaret Ronalds should have no meaning.

Morris noted the sigh.

"What's the matter, Miss Ronalds?" he asked briskly. "Sighing like a furnace? I hope there's nothing wrong."

Margaret smiled at him. "No," she said, "there's nothing wrong."

But Morris was not attending to her

reply. He was not interested in her sighs.

"I say," he exclaimed, "I wish — I hope Mr. Rindge has n't gone off mad." No doubt Morris would have liked to pull his leg — if he could ; and if he could n't, he might have derived some satisfaction from trying. Harrison is a very rich man ; not a man of so much influence as Old Goodwin, but of infinitely more than Morris. Morris looked after him with a regret which he made a hasty and ineffectual effort to conceal as soon as he realized what he was doing. He was rather late. Margaret looked amused but made no reply.

"I say," he exclaimed again, "has n't he a steam yacht — a big one? Something like Mr. Goodwin's?"

"Not so large as Mr. Goodwin's,"

Margaret answered, "but he has a yacht."

"Well, why is n't it here? I should think he would have it here. There's water enough." He made an inclusive motion of his arm.

"I don't know why it is n't here," said Margaret, "but I will ask him, if you like." She said it very seriously.

"Oh, no, it's not worth the trouble." Morris drew a chair near hers and sat down. It was nearer than was strictly necessary. "Now, when I have a yacht," he continued, "I mean that it shall take me about. We shall be inseparable."

"Are you building one, Mr. Gayle?" Margaret asked.

He turned suddenly and looked at her. She seemed quite serious. There was not even a smile in her eyes, which was unusual. He laughed.

"Guying me, Miss Ronalds?" he said. "No doubt I deserve it. I am not building a yacht yet. No such luck. But I mean to. You know that if you wish for anything hard enough you will generally get it, in time."

"That is a bit of useful information," said Margaret, smiling, "which I should like to believe in. Are you so devoted to yachting?"

"Not especially to yachting," Morris replied, tilting his chair back and forth on its hind legs, "but I mean to be able to have anything I want: yachts or cars or any such truck, you know. I mean to be a rich man."

Margaret sighed again. "A very commendable ambition, no doubt."

If Old Goodwin had been there, always supposing that Morris had displayed his inmost soul as completely,

he would probably have thrown Margaret a smiling look of affection, made no remark, and then he would have turned and gone into the house to put on his rubber boots. He would have emerged, presently, on the other side from Morris — one may be very sure of that — and he would have gone clumping down, hoe in hand, to the shore, and he would have dug clams. And Old Goodwin was a rich man, rich beyond the dreams of such as Morris Gayle. As for yachting, why, a man might as well be a sojourner in a great modern hotel as the owner of such a yacht as Morris had in mind. Old Goodwin knew that very well. To call that yachting!

But Morris did not know. "I think it is," he said, in answer to Margaret's last remark. "It's the only way, now-

adays. I speak of yachts because that water, out there, makes me think of 'em, naturally. Lovely, is n't it?"

Margaret only smiled, in response, and murmured something.

It did n't matter to Morris what she said. He was n't listening, anyway.

"Shore looks nice, too, as far as I can see," Morris continued. "Rather inviting, don't you think? What's down behind those trees I saw as I came in?"

Again Margaret murmured something, which Morris took to be a confession of entire ignorance. He was fired with a sudden idea.

"I say, Miss Ronalds, what do you say to exploring a little? Dash for the —er—the shore, you know? I feel that I must get acquainted with the shore."

Now those trees to which Morris alluded so lightly, and which were not visible from where he was sitting, concealed certain clam-beds; the veritable clam-beds to which Old Goodwin would have retreated. Indeed, he might be found there at that moment, very probably, and Margaret knew it. But Margaret is an obliging person.

"If you like," she said. "But I should suppose you would rather get acquainted with the water. You know the shore better, don't you?"

She smiled sweetly as she said it, but Morris suspected her.

"Guying me again, Miss Ronalds?" he asked. "I will give you permission to guy me as much as you like. There are very few that have that privilege."

"Is it a privilege?" Margaret questioned, innocently. "But I was n't. I

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was merely stating what seemed to be a general truth—or asking a question. We'll go, if you like, but not behind those trees. That part is not interesting."

She would have deserved Old Goodwin's blessing for that, and, possibly, one from Eve. There are associations lying thick all about that shore.

"If you dare me," said Morris, "I will take you out on the water. No doubt I shall be able to get a boat somewhere about."

Margaret laughed and shook her head. "No, I thank you." She rose and Morris jumped up quickly. "Shall we go?"

Harrison, sitting within, saw them pass upon the lawn below. He half turned to Alice Carbonnel, who sat by his side, hurt and silent and proud.

"Insufferable ass!" he muttered.

"I can't see why you don't like Mr. Gayle," said Miss Carbonnel. "Is there anything in particular the matter with him? Has he done anything?"

He looked at her curiously. "Why, no, Alice," he replied gently. "I don't know that he has. It is n't so much what he does. It's what he is. I'm sorry for Miss Ronalds."

Alice said nothing, but soon she rose quietly and left him.

v

"Eve," I remarked, "it is a pity that we had let so long a time go by without seeing Morris Gayle."

"Well," she replied in some surprise, "I suppose I shall agree to that remark because you made it, Adam. Come, tell me what you meant by it."

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As she spoke, she moved nearer to me on the seat, — we were sitting under my pine, of course, — and she slipped her hand within my arm.

“What did you mean by it, Adam?” she repeated, turning me around so that she could look into my face. “Come, tell me.”

“I meant what I said, Eve,” I answered, smiling down at her. I would defy any man to look into her face without smiling, assuming that it was upturned to his, and that it had the look in it that it had. I said as much.

“But it would n’t have the same look if you were some other man, Adam,” she said, shaking me. “How absurd! Kiss me, Adam, and answer my question.”

I looked about carefully. I had not

quite finished my looking when she kissed me quickly and softly.

"What a fuss you make about it, Adam, and how slow you are!" she exclaimed. "It's all over. Never mind who saw. We're under our own vine and fig-tree. No more delay. What did you mean by your remark about Morris?"

"I only meant that if we had seen him oftener we should have known how he was developing."

She laughed low. "And what then?"

"Why, then, if we had known how he was developing," I replied, "I hardly think that we should — should we?"

"No, we should n't," she declared emphatically. "I'm sorry, for I knew that you did n't altogether like him."

"I should, at least, have been kept

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from altogether disliking him. I hope that Margaret — ”

“ Oh, Margaret is in no danger,” said Eve, laughing again. “ I only hope that she forgives me. Morris has spent almost every hour of the three weeks he has been here at her feet — figuratively.”

“ It will do Morris good if Margaret can stand it,” I observed.

“ Look, Adam, there is Alice,” Eve said, “ and there is Harrison.”

I looked as I was bidden, and I saw Alice Carbonnel’s great white sloop just leaving her mooring. Alice was at the wheel — she is her own skipper — and Harrison was lazily leaning on one of the cushions and staring at the windmills on the farther shore of the harbor. I thought that his attitude betokened dejection.

"Harrison does n't look happy," I remarked.

"Neither," retorted Eve, "does Alice; although you could n't be expected to see it."

"What's the matter with 'em?" I asked.

Eve laughed and sighed. "The matter," she replied, "is rather complicated and yet absurdly simple. Alice probably thinks Harrison has been too attentive to Margaret,— and I have no doubt he has; too attentive for his own good. And Alice is very sensitive and very proud, and she does n't tell him what he has done."

"And Harrison, poor man, in the simplicity of his heart, is trying to remember his past sins," I finished for her. "He thinks Alice may possibly have new doubts. Oh, I know."

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"Adam," Eve cried sharply,—but she was smiling,—“what do you mean? What is it that you know? Do your past sins trouble you?”

"You forget, Eve. I have no past sins. All of my sins are in the future; if Morris does n't go pretty soon, some of them will be in the near future."

Eve laughed again. She is very obliging, as I have said.

"What I know," I continued, "is that a simple-hearted man has a very slim chance with any woman. There will be misunderstandings,—not on his part,—and he will not have the remotest idea what they are about. Harrison is simple-hearted, in spite of his past sins. I have changed my mind about him since I have known him."

Eve nodded. "They were to have

been married," she observed, thoughtfully, "in July."

"If you think there is some doubt about it, now," I said, "why don't you stick in your oar?"

"Oh, Adam," she said, sighing, "I begin to feel shaky about sticking in my oar. I'm afraid I've done it too much. And, besides, I can't, very well, yet. I must wait until Alice speaks to me about it. Don't you see?"

I'm afraid that I didn't see. But I was saved the necessity of answering and confessing my obtuseness.

"Hello, people!" It was Tom Ellis who had come up silently.

"Oh, Tom," Eve cried, "I'm glad to see you. Sit down here and tell me something."

Tom shook his head. "You see before you," he replied, pointing to the

white sloop, "the sad consequences of sitting down. You can't look at Harrison and repeat the invitation. He has done nothing but sit down too often, and he does n't even know it. But look at him. Is he happy? You'd better be quick about it, for he is almost out of sight."

We laughed. "But, Tom," Eve insisted, "why should n't you sit down? You're too absurd."

"*I* don't know why *I* should n't. Neither did Harrison. But I have the opportunity of observing the evil effects of the practice. Never again."

"Where *is* Cecily?" asked Eve irrelevantly, it might have seemed. "What have you done with her?"

"Oh," said Tom, "*I* don't do anything with *her*. She is the one who does things with me — or without me."

When I went to the door of the studio, it was locked. Cecily told me to go away, please."

"How, then," I inquired, "is she to finish the portrait of your bald spot?"

Tom took off his hat and felt for the spot. "There is," he said reflectively, "is n't there? Well," he continued, putting on his hat again, "I guess I'm played out as a subject, and I'm glad to know the reason. My last portrait was completed last week. It is my last. Cecily thinks that she has about enough portraits of me. It was the twenty-ninth."

He threw himself down on the pine-needles, and looked around; then his glance rested reproachfully and accusingly on Eve.

"What," he asked, "have you done with your children? Where are they?"

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"I have some reason to think," she answered, smiling at him, "that they are in the studio with Cecily. She sent for them over an hour ago."

"What!" he cried, jumping to his feet. "With Cecily? The false traitress! Guess I'd better see about that."

He put out across the road and disappeared. Tom Ellis is a delight, whether unobtrusively silent or playing with our children, or whether he sees fit to be simply amusing.

"Eve," I said, "Tom makes me think, just a little, of Bobby. We'll have Bobby down as soon as Morris gets the sack. I suppose it's of no use to try to stop it now."

Eve sighed. "I'm afraid it's gone too far. But I wish he'd hurry up about it, for I do want to see Bobby. We shan't have to bother about him.

He has known Margaret always, and he knows Alice and Harrison. If we can get Alice and Harrison straightened out again, Adam, I shall keep clear of such tangles. It does no good and it's a tremendous responsibility."

"It's just as well. But, Eve," I reminded her, "you had nothing to do with Alice and Harrison. They engineered that affair themselves."

"Why, so I did n't!" she exclaimed. "It's a great relief; but," she added doubtfully, "it's just what I should have tried to do, if I had had the chance."

VI

Alice Carbonnel and Harrison Rindge had maintained silence until the white sloop had got well out of the harbor. The silence was becom-

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ing oppressive to Harrison. He would have been glad enough to speak. He started to speak several times, but, each time, as he turned to do so, the look on Miss Carbonnel's face checked the words upon his lips. As for Alice Carbonnel herself, she might have been glad, too,—but who can tell the workings of a woman's mind? Who knows her reasons for doing what she does? Herself least of all. So Harrison continued to gaze, impatiently and moodily, far out to the blue horizon; or close alongside, where the sloop kept a little hissing wave. There were no windmills to look at, now, and the shore did not interest him.

“Alice,” he broke out at last. He could stand that silence no longer.

“Yes?” she said gently.

“Alice,” he began again, “I wish

that you would tell me what's the matter."

"There's nothing the matter, Harry," she replied, as gently as before. But she did not look at him; her gaze was held steadily ahead. She was steering. Is it not necessary for the one who steers a boat to look steadily ahead? Entirely in confidence, it is not necessary; not for one who steers half as well as Alice Carbonnel steered. Harrison knew this quite well. "There's nothing in particular the matter," she pursued, "but everything in general, perhaps."

"Well, Alice, what?" Harrison asked desperately. "Is it something that I have done, perhaps, in the days before the flood?" He gave a little laugh of embarrassment.

"No, no," she answered quickly.

"Nothing of that kind. You know we wiped that all out."

There was a quick sigh of relief from Harrison. "I hoped we had," he said. "Then, if it's anything that I've done since, I give you my word, I can't imagine what it is."

Alice would have liked to sigh, but not in relief. "Very likely," she replied, "it's nothing more than that I have a fit of the blues. Let's not talk about it."

There seemed to be nothing for it but to keep silence again; Harrison could not talk lightly, with that between them, but he made a brave effort, without succeeding in extracting more than a word or two from Miss Carbonnel.

"Harry," she began, at last, "it was in July that we were to be married, was n't it?"

"Were!" he cried. "Were to be! We *are* to be—on the tenth. Did you think that I would have forgotten?"

Miss Carbonnel smiled faintly. "No," she said briefly.

"Had you forgotten, Alice?" Harrison asked anxiously.

"I had not forgotten," replied Miss Carbonnel. The faint smile was still on her lips. There was no sign of mirth or of amusement in it. It was a ghost. And she still looked straight ahead, as if she were afraid to look at him. "I have been wondering, Harry, if it would be wise; if we had n't better stop before it is too late."

She spoke gently, as if he were to be soothed like a child.

Harrison was aghast. He was in need of soothing, if a man ever was.

"Stop!" he cried. "You wish to

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stop, Alice? Why? Do you feel doubts as to the wisdom of that last step? They are only the doubts that every girl feels, just before — ”

“ And which every man feels,” interrupted Alice calmly. “ Does n’t he? ”

“ I don’t know how every man feels,” said Harrison impatiently, perhaps, and with a growing exasperation. “ I am only one man. I feel no doubts.”

He is to be excused for feeling some impatience at Miss Carbonnel’s behavior; at this bolt out of a clear sky. His conscience was clear. He did not know how to contend against this.

“ Well,” said Alice, as if dismissing the subject.

She knew, within her soul, that it would be fruitless to discuss the matter; that, if she were let alone, she might come around again to his way

of thinking. But Harrison did not know that, and he protested; and, as he protested, his impatience and his sense of injury grew, so that he was in danger of widening the breach between them. If he had not been very much in love, he would have seen just how the case stood, and he would have acted accordingly. Harrison Rindge was not without experience in such matters.

VII

As the white sloop passed out of the harbor, and before Harrison had ventured to break the silence in which they had started, two persons on the shore were watching her progress; that is, Margaret was watching the sloop and Morris was watching Margaret. Indeed, Margaret seemed glad of anything to take her attention off

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Morris. And that is strange, too, for she was paying him as little attention as she well could, under the circumstances.

She interrupted him in what he was saying; and what that was, Margaret had not the slightest idea.

"See," she said, "there are Miss Carbonnel and Mr. Rindge. Miss Carbonnel would think your steamer was pretty tame, after that. It's a pretty boat, is n't it?"

Morris looked, impatiently. "Very pretty," he replied; "very nice, I'm sure. But do you know what I was saying, Miss Ronalds?"

"No," said Margaret calmly. "Miss Carbonnel and Mr. Rindge are to be married before long. It's interesting, is n't it?"

"Very interesting, I'm sure. Most

interesting for them. But, really, now, I'm more interested in what I was speaking of."

Margaret laughed. She could not have helped it. "Are you, really?" she asked. "How strange!"

"It is strange, is n't it?" Morris looked up suddenly, thinking, perhaps, that he might surprise a look of mockery on Margaret's face. There was none there, and he would have liked to sulk. But that is n't done, you know. "And you really don't know," he asked in astonishment, "what it was that I was saying?"

"I really don't know," Margaret answered, with no sign of interest. "I have n't the least idea what it was. I hope it was n't so very important."

Morris sighed heavily and cast upon her a glance freighted with meaning;

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but as she was not looking at him and, therefore, did not see the glance, she could hardly be expected to trouble herself about its meaning.

"It was — it is important to me," said Morris softly; softly, that is, for him.

Margaret made no reply to this remark.

"It is *very* important to me," Morris repeated, sighing again.

Again Margaret made no reply; but she sighed, this time, gently. Very likely the sigh was one of weariness. Morris did not so interpret it.

"Miss Ronalds," he said, more softly than he had spoken before. "I asked you if you would be my wife. Will you, — Margaret?"

Now, it has often been said that a girl should not receive an offer of mar-

riage that she does not mean to accept. No doubt Margaret had seen that statement many times. Probably it does not apply to the Morris Gayles. Margaret, at least, must have thought so. She must have thought that the only quick, safe way, for her, was to let him ask his question and get his answer and have it over ; as she would have done with a troublesome tooth that she did not want. She would not have coaxed and wheedled, but would have had it out at once, always provided that she did not want it. She did not want Morris.

“ No, Mr. Gayle,” she replied quietly “ I’m sorry, truly, and I thank you, but I can’t.” Then she smiled, which was, undoubtedly, a mistake on her part.

Morris believed her smile rather

than her words. Indeed, he would have found it difficult to believe that any girl could be dissatisfied with him. If there was dissatisfaction, it must be with his prospects.

"But why, Miss Ronalds?" he urged. "Why, Margaret?"

Margaret only shook her head.

"Please, Margaret!"

She shook her head again.

"Is it because I have nothing to offer you yet?" asked Morris eagerly. "Nothing but myself, that is?"

"No," she said.

"I'm going to be a rich man, Margaret. I would give you everything."

Margaret sighed wearily, without an effort to disguise her feelings. "I care nothing about that."

"Well," Morris insisted, "won't you tell me why?"

"Since you insist upon it, Mr. Gayle," she replied with some decision, "I will tell you. It is so simple that you probably have not thought of it. I do not care for you."

He laughed aloud at that. "Is that all?"

"Is n't that enough?"

"Not for me," he said. "That does n't matter."

She made no reply.

"It really does n't matter," Morris continued blithely. "I don't care if you don't care for me, now. That will come, in time. Oh," he added hastily, "I don't mean that it is n't important. It is important, of course, but it is n't the most important thing to me."

"It is important to me," Margaret did not smile; there were various dan-

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ger-signals, but it was not to be expected that Morris would see them.

"Well, is there anybody else, Margaret?"

Margaret's patience was exhausted, apparently. "Mr. Gayle," she said coldly, "if there were no other man in the world, I would n't marry you. I must go in."

That seemed to have penetrated Morris's armor. He rose, without a word, and followed her to the house.

The tooth was out and no gas had been administered.

VIII

It was business, of course, that called Morris away early the next morning. Indeed, it was so imperative that he had to take the very earliest train. That made it very convenient for us, for

the early train left at four minutes before six; and it seemed to be expected that I, at least, would go to the station to see him off. Morris did not care how convenient it was for us. But Eve was very cheerful about it, for she believes in speeding the parting guest, especially if the parting guest is Morris; that is, I have reason to think that is her feeling now, if it was not, precisely, when Morris came. It is wonderful what a visit can accomplish.

I called up Old Goodwin on the telephone that evening, to see about borrowing a car. He has saved his leg, — I don't think Morris has had a chance at it, — and he should have been grateful accordingly.

I heard him chuckling away when I told him so. "I am grateful," he said, "to Margaret. I don't see what there

is to be grateful to you for. I might have had it pulled off for all you would have cared."

I told him that there was more or less truth in that, but I supposed he was capable of taking care of his own legs.

"And here you are," he went on, as if I had not spoken, "trying the same thing. Look here, Adam, I wish that you'd let me give you a car."

That was the very thing I was afraid of. "Oh, please don't," I entreated, "I don't know how to run a car and I could n't afford to keep it in repair."

I felt a touch upon my shoulder and looked around at Eve.

"Give me the telephone, Adam," she said, smiling. "I know what you are talking about."

So she took my place and, in less than a minute, she had persuaded her

father to take us all himself, and at half-past five in the morning. "You know," she said, "it is most important that Morris is in time for that train. It's business, very important. You won't let him miss it, will you, father?"

I could almost hear Old Goodwin chuckle again as he replied.

Eve turned to me. "I'm going to call up Bobby and ask him to come down to-morrow. You won't mind, will you, Adam?"

Even if I had been inclined to mind I could not have resisted the delight in her face. But Bobby Leverett is a joy. Just then, I heard Morris come wandering along the hall, and I hurried out to steer him away. It would never do to have him snooping around our telephone when Eve was talking with Bobby. Eve told me, in the privacy of

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our own room, later, that Bobby was coming, and that he had especially asked if we wouldn't walk home with him "if it was anyways decent walking"; and not to bother about meeting him, anyway, unless we felt like it. He knew the way, and he promised to show up in the course of time.

Margaret heard of it, naturally, in the course of the day, and she came over to go with us.

"Oh," she said, seeing my surprise, I suppose, "Bobby and I are great friends. If you are going to walk back from the station I want to go, too."

We met him, all of us, and he was unaffectedly pleased that we did. He shook hands with me, and he kissed Eve and said a word or two; then he turned to Margaret.

"Well, Madge," he said, "now I

don't know whether I ought to kiss you or not."

Margaret laughed. "Why not, Bobby?" she asked. "You always have."

So Bobby kissed her as he might have kissed his sister if he had had one.

"There!" he said. "Now I feel as if I had got home again. Want to start along, Adam? I don't want to hurry through these woods."

Bobby Leverett is nothing remarkable to look at: not six feet—just about my height—and rather slender, with a face which is not particularly handsome. You would never think, to see him in his clothes, that he was especially athletic, but he was bow oar in the university boat, and he is the possessor of arms and shoulders that it would do your heart good to see.

He strolled ahead with Margaret, stopping whenever the fancy took either of them, or going on short excursions into the woods which fringed the road on either side. Eve and I had hard work to keep behind them, for, wander as slowly as we would, their progress was slower than ours.

Eve slipped her hand in mine and sighed. "Oh, Adam," she exclaimed, "what a pair they would make, would n't they?"

"Yes," I replied, "but we'd better keep our hands off. If they both want to make a pair, they probably will; and contrariwise."

"Contrariwise, probably," said Eve, sighing again. "I *would* like to meddle; but I shan't."

We got home in the course of time, and Bobby went over with Margaret to

— well, because he wanted to and she wanted him to, and because it was the right and natural thing ; and he wished to pay his respects to his aunt and his uncle. Old Goodwin is very fond of Bobby, as is everybody that knows him. I should not be surprised if Old Goodwin's fondness for Bobby had a material effect upon his fortunes. But Bobby is not bothering about that. He is not trying to see how many legs he can pull, but he does the work which lies before him as well as he can, and keeps his eyes open for any legitimate chance that wanders within reach.

He came back in less than an hour, and found us sitting in the usual place under the pine, not saying much, but merely looking out over the harbor and seeing that the children did not fall over the bluff.

"Oh, by Jove!" he cried softly. "I had forgotten it was like this."

Eve and I glanced at each other and smiled, but said nothing; and Bobby threw himself down upon the needles much as Tom Ellis was accustomed to do. He uttered no platitudes about the beauties of nature, but indulged in an eloquent silence with his hat over his eyes, while Pukkie and Tidda rapidly got acquainted with him. He did not speak to them and paid them but little attention, only stretching out his arm when he found Tidda within reach of it; and she, very contentedly, suffered herself to be drawn in by that encircling arm. When she was drawn close, she plucked away his hat, cast it aside, and bestowed upon Bobby a moist kiss. He roused at that, and laughed.

"Hello!" he cried. "Who is this young lady?"

Tidda laughed, too, but did not seem to think it worth while to answer his question. Then she seated herself, very gravely, upon him.

"Bobby," I said, "what are you doing now?"

"Nothing much," he returned lightly. "I've been promoted from chief office-boy to clerk. Had to ask for my vacation by telephone last night. It was a bit sudden, but I guess my relations with the firm will stand the strain."

"I hope so," Eve replied. "I was sorry not to give you more notice, but Morris Gayle only told us yesterday afternoon that he was going to-day. I did not want you to put off coming a day later than you had to, Bobby."

"Thank you, Eve," he said, "I was glad to come."

"How long can you stay, Bobby?" she asked. "We're going to make you stay as long as you can."

"That's very kind of you," answered Bobby, smiling. "I shall have to be satisfied with my two weeks' vacation, I suppose. If you think you can stand me for two weeks, I can ask for nothing better."

It is a pretty poor kind of a person who can't stand two weeks of Bobby. No more was said about Morris, although I know that Bobby has some slight acquaintance with him. Poor Morris!

"It's rather funny," Bobby went on, "that Mr. Wales, — Jimmy Wales, you know, of our firm — seems to know this place. He is only about five years

older than I, and all the boys call him Jimmy. I asked him for my vacation and said that I was coming down here — or that I should like to. He asked no end of questions, and said that he used to know the place once. Do you know him, Adam? ”

I racked my brains, but could find no smallest recollection of Mr. Jimmy Wales. I had heard Bobby speak of him, but that was all.

After dinner there was still nearly an hour of daylight, and Tom and Cecily came wandering across the road, Tom carrying a varied assortment of athletic supplies which he had dragged out of some forgotten corner. There were two bats, a baseball, a catcher's mit, a fielder's glove, and a few other odd things. Bobby was on the ball nine, as well as on the crew; a fact

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which Tom remembered. Then Margaret appeared with Alice and Harrison, and Tom proposed that we should all play ball. And I recollected where I had some things stowed away and I went to get them. There were enough, with Tom's, to fit out all the girls.

We played until dark. Harrison never could play ball.

IX

Bobby was off a great deal in the next few days, and Eve got quite excited, wondering what he was doing. Of course, she couldn't ask him; at all events, she did n't, and it is conceivable that she would have been none the wiser if she had. I don't think that Bobby would lie, even under the circumstances that Eve hoped for. He

has the same large tolerant contempt for a liar that he has for a coward. The Lord made them both, and it is needful to bear with their weakness. But he is neither. The less said about liars and cowards, the better. So Eve thought she was forced to be content with the hope that he was spending his time with Margaret, and that he was making the most of it. He wasn't, as it turned out.

Harrison bestowed much of his society upon us, rather to my surprise. His society was not very uplifting to our spirits, for he was glum and generally disconsolate and silent. He was very patient about it, also to my surprise. Harrison used to be about the most impatient man that I knew anything about. I levied upon him for garden-work, more for his own sake

than for the benefit the garden derived from his labor. Harrison was not good for much as a laborer. He might have been good enough to dig a trench and earn his two dollars a day, but not for a garden. He was continually stepping on my young plants, and the other morning, he conscientiously hoed up thirty hills of young corn, mistaking it for grass. He was just learning to use the wheel-hoe, and he seemed to be proud of his work. When he had finished the corn, he called my attention to it. I dissembled my grief, and suggested that, as he must be tired out with his work, he go and sit down for a while, and watch the water, if he cared to.

“What for?” he asked, in some astonishment. “I’m not tired. I like this wheel-rig. Think it’s great.”

"I'm tired, Harrison," I replied, "if you are not. Besides, time's up. My hours of work are religiously limited. Come on."

I dragged him off by the arm, and we walked up and down near the brink of my bluff, to cool off. On the third turn, I saw Alice Carbonnel's sloop starting out. It was too late to do anything about it. Harrison must have seen it, too.

"Why are n't you in that boat?" I asked, nodding toward the sloop.

"Well," he answered, with a patient smile, "there are two reasons, either of which is sufficient. I have n't been asked for some days, and I don't care much for sailing, anyway."

"You have n't been asked!" I cried. "That must be a mistake, Harrison. Surely, you don't have to wait to be

asked! Miss Carbonnel must take that for granted."

He smiled again and shook his head. "It may be so," he returned, "but I prefer not to go unless I am asked. She has Mr. Leverett aboard, you see."

I looked again and saw Bobby. He was steering, but he glanced over at me and waved a hand. Miss Carbonnel did not look up.

"I don't know what I have done, Adam," Harrison went on. "I must have done something rather flagrant—recently. Oh, it's recent, whatever it is. What is it, do you suppose? I'll be obliged to you if you can give me an idea."

I remembered what Eve had said; I also remembered Tom's lightly dropped remark.

"I'm sure I don't know. Have you,

by chance," I asked, "been too attentive to Miss Ronalds, perhaps?"

"I think not," he answered slowly; "not that I am aware. Miss Ronalds is a most attractive girl, but— but she does n't compare with Alice, you know. Surely, she can't think that?"

I disclaimed any knowledge upon the subject. It was only a suggestion which he might think upon a little; as if it were the case of some other couple in whom he had only a friendly interest.

"It may be," I continued, "that Miss Carbonnel has an idea that you have a pleasure in Margaret's society which you have not in hers. Margaret is much younger. She may also be giving you these opportunities to have that pleasure. Miss Carbonnel is a most unselfish person."

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"Is n't she?" he cried. "But if it is only that—" He smiled with pleasure. "If it is only that she has been thinking of me— Well, Adam, I am obliged for the suggestion."

He went off, walking swiftly, his head held high; and I found Eve.

"I have been putting ideas into Harrison's head," I said. "I hope they may be fruitful. I shall put an idea or two into Bobby's head when I get the chance."

Eve laughed. "Who is meddling now?" she asked.

"I have no intention of meddling, Eve," I answered. "I am merely engaged in throwing out suggestions. If anybody sees anything in them that he wants, he can have it."

It was late when Bobby came in,— so near to dinner that I waited. After

dinner, we walked slowly on the edge of my bluff. Eve and the children sat on the seat—at first; after a few minutes, Eve found herself alone on the seat and Pukkie and Tidda were tagging after Bobby.

“Have a pleasant sail, Bobby?” I asked quite casually, looking casually at the opposite shore.

Bobby looked curiously at me. “Very pleasant,” he replied. “What’s up, Adam?”

I was disappointed. “What makes you think anything is up?”

“I don’t think it,” Bobby remarked, smiling. “I know it. Your interest, Adam, is too—too surreptitious.”

“My interest in your reply to my question is no greater than it should be, Bobby. In fact, I don’t care a rap whether you had a pleasant sail or

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not. Did Miss Carbonnel have a pleasant sail ? ”

He was somewhat puzzled. “ I don’t know whether she did or not. I hope she did. She seemed to enjoy it, all right.”

“ Conversed fluently ? Did not seem to forget that you were there ? Did not always look off at the horizon or up at the sails to see whether they were as flat as they should be ? Looked at you occasionally ? Did not sigh now and then ? ”

He laughed outright. “ You have it to a dot, Adam. But she did look at me occasionally. You are wrong there.”

“ When she remembered that she ought to remember your presence. Alice Carbonnel is — Well, Bobby, you can’t know all that she is, nor

why. We have known her only about a year, and we have been discovering new virtues every week. It is n't likely that we know them all."

He nodded but made no other reply.

"Have you noticed Mr. Rindge or anything about him — in particular?"

"Can't say I have," Bobby returned, evidently wondering what I was coming at. I wondered, myself, where I should come out. "He can't play ball, but I don't suppose you mean that."

"No, I don't mean that, although I acknowledge that that is against him. Miss Carbonnel and Mr. Rindge were to have been married in July."

"Were?" asked Bobby. "And is it off? Come, Adam, tell me what you are driving at."

"I have given you all the information in my possession," I said. "You

can govern yourself accordingly. As to their marriage, I don't know whether it is off or on, but it seems possible that it may be indefinitely postponed. You had better ask Margaret if you are at all interested. I merely wanted to post you."

"Thank you," he replied thoughtfully. "I believe I will ask Madge. I don't want to do anything that — Oh, here they are now."

I turned and saw Margaret and Alice Carbonnel and Harrison coming along the shore. I noted that Alice and Harrison did not speak to each other at all. They did not speak while I was looking.

Just then, Cecily and Tom came across the road, cheerfully, hand in hand.

Miss Carbonnel saw them coming

in at the gate in that fashion — it has its disadvantages for going in at gates — and she turned away, for a moment. I saw her and so did Harrison, but it was only for an instant. When she turned back she was clothed in her old calm, stately, statuesque manner. Whatever the manner she elects to clothe herself in, she cannot hide from us who know her.

X

“Madge,” said Bobby, slumping into a chair, “please tell me all you know about Miss Carbonnel and Mr. Rindge. You may as well,” he added, glancing at her, “tell me anything that I don’t know about any others of interest, at the same time. Remember, I have n’t seen anything of you for nearly a year. Who’s the latest?”

Margaret laughed and colored faintly. She looked very lovely. So Bobby must have thought.

"What makes you think I know anything that anybody would n't know about Miss Carbonnel and Mr. Rindge?" she asked. "And what makes you think there's a latest?"

"You look perfectly sweet when you laugh and blush, Madge," replied Bobby irrelevantly. "Of course there's a latest. What's his name? I'm listening."

"Well, you can keep on listening," Margaret retorted, still smiling, "until you drop. Do you think I want to get into the papers?"

"What do you mean? You know I would n't give you away."

"No, Bobby, but —" Margaret completed the sentence with a mysterious

wave of her hand, which included all the doors and windows near as well as the roof over her head.

"Oh, that's it," said Bobby, rising promptly. "Come on, Madge, we're going rowing. Are there any good boats on the place? Or shall I sneak Adam's? He's got a good one, and I know where he keeps it."

"Adam would give you particular fits," she returned, laughing again. "I've a good mind to let you get fits. You deserve to. But I won't if you'll promise to be on my side and to stand by me."

"Did I ever fail to stand by you?" Bobby asked indignantly. "I deny the allegation and despise the alligator."

"All right, Bobby. You've been a pretty good boy. There are plenty of boats, and I'll show you where they are."

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She rose and, with Bobby at her side, walked swiftly across the lawn and took a path which led them through a grove of trees and out upon the shore. Here, beyond the clam-beds, is the portion of Old Goodwin's water-front upon which he has spent the most in labor and money. There is a stone pier, with steps and a landing-stage ; and, beyond the pier, again, is a little artificial harbor with a wall of stone. Within this harbor lay half a dozen boats. Of the boats, Bobby quickly made his choice ; and they went into the boat-house to get the oars and cushions.

When Bobby had got well out into the middle of the harbor, he stopped rowing.

" Now, Madge," he said. " Miss Carbonnel and Mr. Rindge first, so as to get them settled ; then yourself and the latest."

"What do you want to know about Miss Carbonnel and Mr. Rindge?" she asked. "Perhaps I don't know it."

"Adam intimated that you would probably know."

She dabbled her hand daintily in the water. "I suppose that is the reason you did not sail with Miss Carbonnel to-day."

"Yes," he replied, "because of what Adam told me. Of course, Madge, if there's any row on, I don't want to be in it. But what's it all about, anyway?"

"I don't know," said Margaret decidedly, feeling for her handkerchief to dry her hand. "Got a handkerchief, Bobby? I must have lost mine."

Bobby handed her his handkerchief.

"Thank you," she said. "I don't know what it's about. But ever since Miss Carbonnel and Mr. Gayle —"

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Bobby snorted and Margaret smiled.

"That's what I think of him," she observed. "But I was saying that they came out on the piazza, one day, and found Mr. Rindge and me sitting there, talking; and it's — it's been, ever since."

"Oh," said Bobby.

"Yes," said Margaret. "Bobby, you're mean," she added. "I don't want Mr. Rindge, and there's good reason why, even if he wanted me and Miss Carbonnel did n't want him. We were just talking —"

"Oh," said Bobby again.

"Just silly talk," Margaret went on, as though Bobby had not spoken. "I just longed to tell Miss Carbonnel that there was no occasion for her — her to feel the least bit jealous. But how could I? I could n't just butt

right in and say that *I* did n't want her old Harrison, and that she should n't be jealous. How should I feel, if some other girl should tell me that *she* did n't want Ji— Oh!" cried Margaret, clapping her hand over her mouth.

"Ah!" exclaimed Bobby, in tones of satisfaction. "I knew we should get to it. You can tell me about him in a minute. So I gather that some disinterested person is needed to act as patcher-up."

Margaret laughed. "He should be prepared to sacrifice himself."

"Behold the Board of Arbitration! I'll undertake to fix it up, even if I perish in the process. And now, Madge, you may go ahead with your own affairs. I knew very well there was a latest — since my last information. I'm listening."

"Oh, you are!" said Margaret; but she spoke doubtfully, and Bobby detected the doubt.

"Yes, I'm listening. Drive ahead, Madge."

"I don't know whether —" began Margaret, still doubtfully. "You don't deserve it, Bobby."

"Talk about the gratitude of women!" exclaimed Bobby. "Here I've —"

"Who's talking about the gratitude of women?" Margaret interrupted. "I was n't."

"Catch you saying anything about it!" he retorted. "I was about to deliver a few observations on that subject. I've stood manfully by you in all your scrapes; and you have always been the champion scraper, Madge, so to speak."

She laughed at this. "So he has!" she said soothingly. "So he has stood by his little cousin!"

"Cousin nothing!" cried Bobby scornfully. "Let me call your attention, Miss Ronalds, to the fact that there is not the most distant relationship between us. I would defy the Heralds' College to find any. But you know very well that you are intending to confide in me. You are wasting valuable time, Madge. As soon as Miss Carbonnel's vessel appears in the offing I must away to immolate myself upon the altar of friendship."

"You are delightfully absurd, Bobby," said Margaret, laughing again. "Well, then, there *is* a latest."

"Tell me something I don't know," replied Bobby scornfully. "What's his name — his last name?"

Margaret was smiling continuously. "You know it ; and you know him."

Bobby looked puzzled. "What?" he asked. "How do I know it—and him?"

"He used to know this place." Margaret included, in her glance about and her nod, the harbor and the village. "He has n't been here for years."

Bobby still looked puzzled. Suddenly his face cleared, and he smiled delightfully.

"Upon my word! It is n't, is it?"

"How should I know?"

"Well, listen to this." He bent forward and whispered a name. Margaret smiled more than ever, and nodded brightly.

"Well, upon my word!" cried Bobby again.

He bent forward again, and Marga-

ret, thinking he was about to whisper once more, bent to meet him. He did not whisper, but he kissed her cheek.

"Congratulations, Madge!"

She was blushing, but not faintly. "Bobby — Leverett! Right out in the middle of the harbor where everybody that there is can see! Aren't you ashamed?"

"I search my feelings and I am unable to find a trace of shame. But, Madge, I thought your mother sent you down here to —"

"To get me out of his way? She did."

"To get you out of the way!" he roared. "Out of his way? Your mother can't know him. Why, he's one of the best—" He broke off, chuckling.

"He's coming down in a day or

two," Margaret remarked. "Nobody knows. Will you help us, Bobby?"

"Of course I'll help you. I'll even exceed my leave of absence, if necessary. I guess I'd be forgiven." And Bobby grinned.

"I guess you would," Margaret murmured. "Even mother would forgive you. You have a talent for getting forgiven, Bobby." She was looking absently out of the harbor and down the bay.

"That's because," said he, "my deeds are always meritorious and my motives are always right. If you, Madge," he continued, "would always perform meritorious acts instead of those you do perform, you would save yourself lots of trouble and would keep out of scrapes." He grinned at her again.

"Fudge, Bobby!" said Margaret.

"If you begin saying things like that, I'll throw water on you. There's Miss Carbonnel's sail in the offing."

"Oh, is it? Then we must cease our playful badinage and attend to our duty." Bobby's back was turned to the offing, so that he had not seen the sail. "It is curious that a girl should always be calling attention to things that are just where I can't see 'em without breaking my neck. It's your duty to go in; that is, unless you prefer to go with me."

"I don't," said Margaret decidedly.

Bobby began to row.

"I will let you know," said Margaret, "what sort of help I want from you."

"I know, I guess," he returned.

As Miss Carbonnel made her moor-

ing, she was surprised to find Bobby Leverett waiting.

"Miss Carbonnel," he called, "I have come to take you ashore."

At which announcement she only nodded and smiled faintly.

XI

If Bobby's courage was born of inexperience and indiscretion and plain ignorance, it seems to have been crowned with the success that such high courage merits. To be sure, he probably did not know the quality of courage that would be required of him, —how could he, never having been in love? But if he did not know when he helped Alice Carbonnel into his boat, to take her ashore, it is barely possible that he did know by the time he got ashore. It is even possible that

he was very glad to get there. I would not have undertaken the enterprise for a farm ; I cannot conceive of my being induced to undertake it for any consideration whatever. I should go into battle with more peace of mind and a quieter pulse.

I saw Bobby waiting for Miss Carbonnel with his boat, and I divined his errand. I judge that the marriage is on again, if it was ever off; for I happened upon two persons on the bank near my clam-beds as I was prowling about in the early morning of the next day. The girl had her head on the man's breast and her arms around his neck when I first saw them. I would have scuttled off, but, in my haste, my foot struck a large pebble and dislodged it from its bed and made me stumble, into the bargain, so that there

followed a rattling of stones that might have wakened the dead. Harrison was not dead, nor was Alice. They jumped quickly, and then Harrison roared with laughter.

"Here, Adam," he cried, "come back here. It's of no use to try to get quietly away."

"It's not of much use, it's true," I replied ruefully. "These blasted round stones are big as a foot-ball! And they call them pebbles! I might have broken my leg in trying to save your feelings."

Alice was very red as I came up to them, but she was laughing, too.

"It's all Bobby Leverett's fault," she said, "that you find us here—trespassing, I have no doubt."

"I must put up a sign," I remarked, "like that in Watson's field, which Pukkie read 'Trespases forgiven!'"

"Bobby Leverett," Miss Carbonnel began again, "is —"

"Is an optimist," I finished for her; "or he was."

"He has no reason to be anything different," she returned, smiling delightfully. "I have become very fond of Bobby Leverett."

"It is a habit," I said, "that it is easier to get into than it is to get out of."

"It is not a habit of long standing, with me," she said; "only since yesterday afternoon. I have had no desire to get out of it yet."

"That is the worst of it. What has Bobby done now?"

"A great many pleasant things. As the result of one of them, you find us here."

"Ah!" I said.

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"We could n't sleep, either of us," Harrison broke in, "and I wandered down here. Presently Alice came down and found me."

"One would judge," I observed, "that she had found you."

Alice blushed and laughed. "I had no chance last night, Harry. I told you." Then she turned to me. "Is Bobby — has Bobby — Oh, you know what I mean. I wish he might fall in love with — with some one that we would all like."

"I have no doubt he will, in time," I said, "but if you mean Margaret, — why, Bobby is an obstinate beast. And Margaret is another."

Alice Carbonnel sighed.

"Talk with Eve about it," I suggested. "You may accomplish something, yet, between you. Good-by. My clock tells

me that it is getting near breakfast-time."

"Your clock!" said Harrison, in astonishment. Harrison is not quick, to say the least, in such matters.

"I carry a clock inside me," I returned. "It calls my attention to the time, infallibly; especially to breakfast-time and dinner-time."

Harrison seemed to be puzzling over that matter of my clock when I left them.

I told Eve about Alice and Harrison, of course. She was much pleased, and she said that she must run over and see Cecily for a minute, after breakfast, to borrow a pattern or some equally important matter. What does Cecily know about patterns? What does Eve care for patterns, as far as that is concerned? I smiled.

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"I would n't tell her too much, Eve," I said, "I may have been indiscreet."

She squeezed my arm. "Alice must know," she replied, "that you have no secrets from your wife, Adam."

No doubt she does. And no doubt, too, Eve is more discreet than I am. I asked her pardon, and I walked with her across the road to Cecily's. I did not go in, for I had a mind to walk farther. Eve left me rather precipitately, I thought. When I had fully recovered from my surprise I turned about and there was Mrs. Green, coming down the road under full sail and making violent signals to me.

It was of no use to try to escape. Mrs. Green, it seemed, was expecting her nephew that morning; a nephew who had not been to see her for many years. He was in New York, and had

been there for a long time, and he was doing very well, — very well indeed; but she had always been fond of him. She poured out her heart to me there, on the edge of what we like to call a sidewalk. It is covered with a layer of very small and very sharp stones which cut one's shoes. I refer to the sidewalk, not to Mrs. Green's heart. She has no one to whom she feels at liberty to pour out her heart. Poor soul! Everybody avoids her, thinking, apparently, that it is her heart which is covered with little sharp stones which might inconvenience one. I have been as bad as the worst of them, and probably I shall continue to be; but at the moment I was sorry for her.

In the joy which she felt at having an opportunity to talk of her nephew, who lives in New York, and of whom

she is still very fond in spite of the fact that he has not been to see her for years, Mrs. Green did not once mention her health. I had not known that she had a nephew. But there are many things I do not know about Mrs. Green and few that I do know. I know everything there can be to know about her health, for she has told me everything she knows about that, and many things that she does n't know. Tom Ellis joined me, and Mrs. Green appealed to him.

"Jim?" asked Tom, in surprise. "Yes, indeed, I remember him. I saw him once or twice last winter, sporting about in a large new motor." He looked up. "Speaking of motors, Adam —"

I had heard it, although it ran very quietly. It stopped beside us, and there were Margaret and Old Goodwin. They gave a pleasant greeting to Mrs. Green,

Margaret's greeting being unnecessarily friendly, I thought. In fact, I rather wondered how she happened to know Mrs. Green at all.

"Come on, Adam," said Old Goodwin, "and you, too, Tom. We're only going for a little spin about the roads."

I got in beside him, with unseemly haste, I am afraid. Tom refused, and we left him trying to satisfy Mrs. Green's eager desire for further information about Jim and the motor.

We went off down the road that leads to the station. It leads to other places, too, and the road is beautiful enough in itself, without regard to what it leads to. But my attention was divided. I was trying to enjoy the beauties about me, and I was trying to keep up some sort of a conversation with Margaret, who

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looked prettier than ever, and who seemed even better contented with the world than usual ; and I was intently watching Old Goodwin's manipulation of the wheel and the various little levers thereto adjoining and his pedipulation of the knobs that stuck up through the floor. For I was determined to learn how to run a motor. I had come reluctantly to that determination, and I was a good deal ashamed of it, and resolved to conceal my resolution as long as possible. The result of divided attention was what might have been expected. I did not get any of the three things done, and we had been gone a half hour and were approaching the station on our way home before I knew it.

A train was just starting up, and Old Goodwin let out another kink, intend-

ing, I have no doubt, to race with it; but in a few seconds we met it. It was going the wrong way; and Old Goodwin looked disappointed, and reduced the speed and sighed. We passed the station and saw, ahead of us, a well-dressed man, sauntering along the road. Old Goodwin looked at him rather hard, I thought, and, just as we were passing him, the car stopped, so suddenly that I was very nearly thrown out.

“ Good Lord ! ” cried Old Goodwin. “ It ’ s Jim Wales ! What are you doing here, Jim, and what are you walking for ? Come, get in . ”

Jim Wales smiled pleasantly. He reminded me of Bobby Leverett; a few years older, and his smile was a little sharper, but still open and pleasant. He seemed to be about Bobby’s height

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and about mine ; nothing remarkable, either way.

“ Good-morning, Mr. Goodwin,” he said. “ I just got in on the train. There did n’t seem to be any other way to get there but to walk. It’s no hardship in such weather and over this road. Used to be here a good deal, you know, but I have hardly seen the place for twelve or fifteen years.”

“ M—m,” was the only answer. You can’t tell what Old Goodwin thinks from what he says. He introduced Mr. Wales to Margaret and then to me. “ I guess your mother would n’t object,” he said to her, turning to her, his eyes twinkling.

Margaret was smiling. “ Oh,” she said, “ I hope not.”

“ I’ll vouch for Jim Wales,” added Old Goodwin.

"Thank you," said Mr. Wales. Margaret seemed much amused.

Meanwhile Mr. Wales had seated himself beside Margaret and had shaken hands with me.

"I've met Mr. Wales," Margaret observed, "already."

"Oh!" said Old Goodwin.

"Yes," said Mr. Wales, "I confirm that. I have had the honor—Ugh!"

I could have sworn that Margaret gave him a hunch with her elbow, and in the short ribs. But I did n't actually see it, and Old Goodwin was busied in starting the car and did n't notice.

"Have you met him more than once?" I asked suavely.

Margaret was laughing silently and so hard that she could n't answer. I looked at her accusingly. Mr. Wales

was not even smiling, but was quite solemn.

He answered for her. "I believe she has." He turned to her. "Have I had that honor more than once?" Margaret drew back her elbow again, but he blocked it with his own. "Have n't I?"

Margaret nodded assent.

"I thought I could not be mistaken," he remarked. "One does n't forget Miss Ronalds so readily."

"Oh!" cried Margaret, under her breath. "You just wait!"

"I will," replied Mr. Wales, smiling, "as long as it may be necessary."

Then I turned about, leaving Margaret still laughing silently and Mr. Wales smiling. I considered Margaret's behavior suspicious; but I heard nothing from the seat behind me which

would confirm my suspicions. I heard nothing at all.

XII

When I got home, Eve had just come back from Cecily's. I hastened to tell her of my experience and my conclusions.

"Where's Bobby?" she asked at once.

Bobby had been out fishing since the early morning. I was surprised that Eve should have forgotten it.

"We will go fishing, Adam," she announced.

"Now?"

"Now."

So Eve proceeded to change her dress, while I got out the dory and waited for her. She is not so careless of dresses as she was five years ago.

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When she goes fishing, she wears an old one.

I did not have long to wait, and she took a pair of oars and we rowed out to the ledge together. It is not very far.

Bobby was not so deeply absorbed in his fishing that he did not see us coming, and he held up two diminutive scup and one tautog.

"What's the matter with me?" he asked. "Am I in the wrong place?"

"Yes," I answered. "You should be, at this moment, on Mr. Goodwin's piazza with Margaret and Mr. Wales."

"What! Jimmy?" he cried; but he did not look as much surprised as I thought he ought, under the circumstances. "Did he ask where I was?" And he grinned.

"I did not hear him mention your

name. There is no reason to suppose that he remembered your existence."

"Oh, now, Adam!" Bobby said, trying to look disappointed. "Don't chuck me down so hard. I'm fragile."

"It's of no use to try to evade, Bobby," said I sternly. "You may as well tell all you know about it."

"About what?" asked Bobby in pretended sulkiness. "I don't know anything about anything."

"Bobby!"

He wiped his eyes with his sleeve. "Please, sir, don't be hard on a poor boy!—I did n't do it. It was that other fellow that's on the piazza. And, please, sir, won't you tell me where I could catch some fish?"

"I'm disappointed in you, Bobby."

"Don't be, Adam. It only makes you unhappy."

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"And you?"

"It has no effect upon me."

I looked at Eve. "We came out here to fish, Eve. This relative of yours is evidently lost to all sense of gratitude. Let us fish then."

"Oh, I say!" Bobby exclaimed.

I paid no attention to him, but paddled over until the buoy bore a little west of south, and I cast over my grapnel about a hundred feet from it. In ten minutes we were catching fish rapidly; fairly good-sized scup with an occasional tautog. Bobby watched us enviously; then pulled up his anchor and came over.

"Eve," I remarked in an unnecessarily loud voice, "this other man seems to have no proper feeling about fishermen's rights. Let's go home."

Eve smiled and Bobby grinned. He

said nothing, but waited until I had pulled up my grapnel, then threw over his anchor in the identical spot that mine had left. I had barely time to get out of his way.

"It is evident, Eve," I said, as I was rowing home, "that Bobby knows more than he is willing to tell."

She made no reply immediately, but sat in the stern with her hands in her lap, gazing past me.

"Well, Adam," she said at last, "we 'll just have to wait, like any other outsiders. That has its advantages, has n't it?"

XIII

Old Goodwin asked Jim Wales to dinner on that first day, which mark of favor took Margaret's breath away. Wales accepted. He asked him to lunch, too, but Wales declined. That

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would have been rather steep, as he came down to visit his aunt, ostensibly at least. For I put Mrs. Green's two and Mr. Wales's two together, and they seem to point to the fact that he is Mrs. Green's nephew.

Altogether, Jimmy Wales seemed to be *persona grata* at the Goodwins'. Old Goodwin had him dining and lunching there at every opportunity; and, although I have learned, since, through Bobby, that there was some kind of a deal pending in which Mr. Wales could be of assistance to Mr. Goodwin, I believe that had very little to do with it. If that was the explanation, Margaret seconded him very ably, and he should have been grateful to her. I have no doubt that he was.

As for Jimmy himself, he seemed well enough content to spend his after-

noons and his evenings in the society of Margaret or Old Goodwin or both. There did not appear to be anything below the surface. Eve and I were there on several occasions, and we were unable to detect anything of the kind, although we were on the lookout for it.

Bobby's vacation must have been of the elastic sort, for he stretched it well beyond the two weeks he had mentioned. But that was between Mr. Wales and Bobby. Mr. Wales was Bobby's employer, or one of them.

So it went on for ten days or so, Jimmy Wales seeming very well satisfied, and Margaret even more placid and content and non-committal than usual. It was difficult to imagine that Jimmy and Margaret were more than good friends, or were likely to be. The

whole thing was mysterious and exciting—for a week. Alice Carbonnel got interested and so did Cecily; and still it went on and nothing happened. And Cecily lost her interest and Alice Carbonnel began to lose hers, as there was nothing to keep it up. Even with us it was getting to be a struggle.

“Well, Eve,” I remarked, on the eleventh day after Jimmy Wales’s arrival, “I guess we might as well give up worrying about Margaret.”

“Yes,” she replied, smiling. “It does n’t look very promising, does it?”

I made no answer to this, and she was silent, looking thoughtfully out over the harbor.

“Father has been away for the past two days,” she observed presently.

“What has that fact to do with it?”

“Nothing, probably,” she returned,

smiling again. "Mother's away, too. Where has Bobby been keeping himself lately? I scarcely catch a glimpse of him all day."

"Fishing, I think."

Eve rose slowly from her seat. "Come, Adam, walk along the shore with me."

I went readily enough. I have few greater pleasures than walking with Eve, especially along the shore. We wandered to the bank just above my clam-beds. There is an excellent view from this bank. On one side there is the harbor, and on the other lies the bay twinkling in the sun.

"Adam," said Eve, "Bobby does not appear to be fishing; not on Bartley's at any rate."

The buoy on Bartley's leaned solitary in a waste of waters.

"It even looks lonesome," I re-

marked; "as if it felt it. But where is Bobby? And why such duplicity on his part?" I turned and gazed at Eve.

She shook her head; and we heard a sound behind us, of the rattling of loose stones. We turned and saw a boy walking as fast as he well could. Evidently he had been running, but running through sand is not an exercise one wishes much of. It was Watson's boy. Watson lives on the same street with Mrs. Green, next door but one. That means an eighth of a mile away.

"Say," he announced, "Mis' Green wants you should come up to her house, 's fast 's you kin." He was much out of breath.

We asked him what was the matter with whom. He shook his head, professing ignorance. He began to run up the path to the great house.

"I got an errand," he shouted, turning, "up here. They's others I got to tell."

There was nothing to be got out of him, and we hurried off, wondering if Mrs. Green had had a stroke; then if it could be Jimmy who had had one. It was I who suggested Jimmy Wales.

Eve smiled at the idea. "I have no fears for Mr. Wales's health," she said.

"I have a premonition, Eve, that that precious cousin of yours is at the bottom of this."

"Which cousin, Adam?" asked Eve, looking up at me innocently.

"It was Bobby I meant," said I. "I forgot Margaret, for the moment. Now that you remind me, it would not surprise me to find them both at the bottom of it. They are quite capable of it."

"At any rate, Bobby is not fishing."

"Not on Bartley's," I replied.

We turned to glance at Bartley's, for in another moment our hurrying steps would have taken us out of sight of it. Our steps were not too much hurried, for we had concluded, tacitly, that it was highly improbable that Mrs. Green had had that stroke, or an attack of appendicitis. She has lived for years, in daily fear of both.

Eve smiled again. "Look, Adam," she said, pointing down the bay. "There comes father."

I do not know why the sight of that great white steamer just turning into the bay should have had power to do what the urgent message carried by Watson's boy had failed to do; but I found myself hurrying; I was almost running. So was Eve. By the time we

had climbed the path, she was breathless.

I grinned. "What's your hurry, Eve?"

"Oh," she answered, "do let me get my breath." She smiled. "Mrs. Green, you know, may be suffering."

"To be sure," I agreed. "So she may."

Again we hurried. Mrs. Green's is not very far, and in less than five minutes we were mounting her steps. The door was open and she herself appeared.

"Oh, there you are!" Eve exclaimed. "We were afraid something had happened to you, Mrs. Green."

Mrs. Green seemed much excited. "Nothing's happened to me," she said, in a hoarse whisper; "at least, nothing bad. You come right in. They were just going to begin."

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The first person we saw, on going in, was Bobby. He was grinning, of course. Then we saw Margaret, attired in a traveling dress, and smiling, too; and, behind her, our clergyman, in his surplice, standing before the mantel, with an open book in his hand. I saw nobody else.

"Oh, Bobby!" cried Eve, "wait a little while, can't you? Father is coming. The yacht will be in within ten minutes."

"Yes, I know." I recognized Mr. Wales's voice. It was quiet but decided. "I know. We may as well proceed, I think."

I should have known it was Jimmy Wales, for the most unimportant person at a wedding is the prospective bridegroom. I had not been aware of his presence until that moment. And,

when we came in, I had thought it was Bobby!

Mr. Wales nodded to the clergyman. That clergyman made short work of it. In a few minutes it was all over and we were inscribing our names in a little book bound in white leather, which the clergyman had given to Margaret. In the midst of it all in came Tom and Cecily, Alice Carbonnel and Harrison, and Old Goodwin himself.

Old Goodwin was smiling his sweet smile of peace. He took Margaret in his arms for a moment and kissed her.

"Oh, uncle!" she cried. "I thought — I thought —" And Margaret, the calm, the self-possessed, dropped her head upon his shoulder and cried softly.

"Yes, yes, Peggy, dear!" he said, pat-

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ting her shoulder gently. "I know what you thought. I can't interfere now, and I have no wish to."

"We wanted to have it in the church," said Margaret earnestly, "but — but it might have made some talk — that — that you could n't have —"

Old Goodwin chuckled. "Could n't have disregarded?" he asked. "Well, it's all over, now. Jimmy," he said, turning to that gentleman, "I have just heard, within the last day or two, that you're the very chap that I was to keep Margaret out of the way of."

"Why," Jimmy Wales replied, grinning broadly, "that's too bad, is n't it? I mean that your news should have come too late. What do you intend to do about it?"

"Really," Old Goodwin returned thoughtfully, "I have not decided.

Meanwhile, until I come to some decision, you and Margaret might care to borrow the yacht for a week or two." He made this suggestion with some diffidence. "She's lying there, all ready to start. And there are some things I got — But you'll find them." He broke off, chuckling. "Your mother-in-law, Jimmy, — my cousin Peggy — should have warned me. There's no knowing what scrapes my confiding nature may have got me into with such a suspicious character as you seem to be."

As Mr. and Mrs. Wales went out, on their way to the yacht, Old Goodwin chuckled again. "I wonder," he said, "how Cousin Peggy will like it. But she ought to have told me. She should have warned me against you, Jimmy."

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